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3 THE CHILKOOT PASS AND THE GREAT GOLD RUSH of 1898

Richard J. Friesen

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Cover: The last 1,000 feet to the summit of the Chilkoot Pass. (Public Archives Canada.)

THE CHILKOOT PASS AND THE GREAT GOLD RUSH OF 1898

Richard J. Friesen

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ABSTRACT

The rush over the Chilkoot and White passes reached its zenith in the winter of 1897-98 when an unprecedented number of goldseekers scrambled over the mountain barrier to the Klondike. Actually a place in Yukon history had been secured for the Yukon Pass long before the gold rush. A major trade route for the Tlingit Indians, the natives retained control of the Chilkoot Pass until the 1880s when the prospecting and trading activities of the Europeans and Americans dictated the necessity of a short route into the Yukon. In this study I trace the history of the Chilkoot Pass, emphasizing its important role in Yukon transportation, the great rush of 1898 and the establishment of an administrative structure after the boom period. The Chilkoot Pass played a significant role in the transportation infrastructure throughout the southwestern Yukon that would form the basis for Yukon development.

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DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION OF THE YUKON

The Fur Trade

The Russians and the Russian American Company

The voyages and discoveries of the unfortunate Vitus Bering, a Danish naval explorer in the service of Imperial Russia, opened the door to the natural riches of North America to the Russian traders.[1] Bering died during the winter of 1742 on his second voyage of discovery, but the return of his ship, the *St. Peter*, with its cargo of magnificent furs and tales of the bounty of fur-bearing animals on the islands off the North American continent was enthusiastically welcomed by the fur-hungry Russians. Russian fur hunters lost little time planning further expeditions to the new land of Alaiska (Alaska).

Continued Russian exploration, and more importantly, the endless pursuit of the ever-retreating fur frontier, led the Russian hunters and traders through the Aleutian Islands to the Alaska Peninsula and southeast along the Alaskan mainland during the early 19th century. The search south into the islands of the Alexander Archipelago brought the Russians into contact with the Kolosh (Tlingit Indians), the most warlike and independent people the Russians had encountered in the eastward expansion. The Tlingit maintained a sporadic and uneasy peace with their newly acquired Russian trading partners - a peace that was marked by slaughter, rapine, retaliation and revenge on both sides.

The establishment of New Archangel (Sitka) on Baranof Island in the Alexander Archipelago after 1800, its subsequent sacking by hostile Tlingits and its violent re-establishment by Count Baranof characterized the often disturbed peace. Nevertheless, Sitka developed as the headquarters of the Russian American Company. The trading company held an imperial trade monopoly over all the Russian territory in North America. This monopoly was renewed and maintained periodically, making Alaska the domain of a fur-based commercial enterprise, until its sale to the United States.

Throughout the period of Russian control of Alaska, the settlements were invariably located on promentories near the mouths of rivers or on bays and generally on the extremities of the mainland, reflecting the pressing necessity of the maritime hunt and the native hostility. Relatively little attention was paid to large-scale systematic investigation of the interior. The Russians wanted furs and the other resources of Alaska were of secondary interest. Rumours of gold and the search for it, that would later consume Alaska and the Yukon, was not allowed to thwart the fur trade, although a local rush in 1850-51 to the Kenai Peninsula on the south coast of Alaska illustrated the disruptive force of a gold rush.[2]

While the Russians traded with many of the northwest Indian peoples, including the various tribes of the Tlingit Indians, there is no evidence to indicate that any attempt was made to penetrate the interior from southeast Alaska. Ironically the Russians located their 19th-century headquarters at Sitka less than 200 miles from the headwaters of the "Great River" Yukon which they called the Indian name Kwikhpak.[3] The ascension of the Yukon would absorb much of their time and energy in later years.

The area at the head of Lynn Canal was occupied constantly from 1799 onward and as early as 1813 the Russians had established a trading post in the village of Chil'khat (Chilkat) at the foot of the Chilkat trail which led into the Yukon River valley. The Russians did not attempt to cross the mountains into British Territory or to gain access to the interior, but it is inconceivable that the Russian fur traders would have been unaware of the passes through the mountains north of Lynn Canal.[4] Their Indian trading partners carried the Russian trade goods into the interior, exchanging them with the Indians along the Yukon River for the furs that were taken back to the Russians on the coast. In all likelihood, the Tlingit, in an attempt to safeguard their status as middlemen, refused access to the Russians who were content to have the furs brought to them, avoiding the disruption of open warfare.

In 1832 the establishment of Mikkailovsky Redoubt or St. Michael in Norton Sound on the west coast of Alaska began the exploration of the Kwikhpak (Yukon) River. By 1839 the Russian traders had reached some 400 miles up the Yukon and established a block house-trading post at Nulato. Lieutenant Lavrenity Alexkseyevich Zagoskin, under orders from the chief of the Russian American Company, Baron Petrovich Wrangell, pushed 150 miles farther up the Yukon in 1842, to a point just east of Ruby, Alaska. A leaking hide boat and the swiftness of the Yukon current forced Zagoskin to abandon his hopes of exploring the Yukon to its source.[5] Instead he concentrated his efforts on charting the lesser Kushokwin River eastward into the interior. Thus the Russians managed only a superficial penetration of the vast interior of Alaska. It would be left to the British Hudson's Bay Company and to the Americans to unlock the secrets of the Yukon River.

The Tlingit Traders

The Tlingit Indians controlled almost all of the Alaska panhandle and were destined to come into direct and overwhelming contact with the white culture. The period of contact, always marked by conflict, finally resulted in the devastation of the Tlingit economy. From the late 18th century the white incursion from the sea increased, climaxing 100 years later in the Klondike gold rush.

Initial reports from the European and American traders told of a well-developed trading structure, based on an intricate system of barter, among the Tlingits and their neighbours.[6] The Indian trader was an important individual in the community and the various tribes did not hesitate to travel great distances to acquire the goods they needed. The Tlingit traded with the Haida Indians in the Queen Charlotte Islands and the Tshimsham near the Skeena River, 500 miles to the south.

The Tlingit Indians also had a long tradition of trade with the Athapascan Indians who occupied the upper Yukon drainage basin. The precise date of the beginning of this trading relationship is not known but it was well developed by the mid-18th century.[7] The Chilkats maintained the role of dominant trading partner as well as the sole source of white trade goods in all dealings with the Athapascans. They monopolized the trade routes and blocked any contact between the Athapascans and the Russian, American or British traders who frequented the southern coast.[8] To ensure their domination, the Chilkats traded far into the interior, reaching as far as the White, upper Tanana and the Yukon rivers and trading aggressively with the interior Indians whom the Tlingit considered to be uncivilized and inferior beings.[9]

There was a high degree of economic interdependence among the coastal Indians and the products secured by trade with the Athapascans played an essential role. The most highly desired interior goods were durable moose and caribou hides and placer copper for which the Tlingit traded fish oil, iron and shell ornaments. The appearance of the Russians and other white traders on the coast stimulated an increased trade in furs.[10] While contact between the whites and Indians in the interior occurred between Robert Campbell of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Athapascan people along the Pelly and Lewes rivers, these developments threatened to effect a change in the long-standing trade patterns.

The Tlingits had jealously guarded their trade monopoly with the interior Indians against other coastal tribes and against the Russian encroachment from the sea. The appearance of the Hudson's Bay Company posed another serious breach in the security of the trading system. The reaction to this newest threat was violent. A band of the warlike Chilkat travelled inland to the confluence of the Pelly and Lewes rivers in the upper Yukon valley where the intruder Campbell had established Fort Selkirk.[11] The trading post was sacked and left in ruin in 1852. The economically tenuous operation at Fort Selkirk had received its death blow and was subsequently abandoned and not re-established.[12]

The trade routes of the various Tlingit tribes were closely guarded by the respective tribes. The Chilkat went into the interior via the Chilkat Pass lying to the northwest of the Chilkat Inlet arm of Lynn Canal. The Chilkoot, on the other hand, used the shorter, steeper Chilkoot Pass at the head of the Taiya Inlet. Any alteration to this arrangement was taken very seriously and required lengthy negotiations. Similar formal agreements were made between the coastal Indian traders and their interior trading partners over patronage relationships which were also inflexible.[13]

Extensive trading expeditions were taken during the winter and summer on a regular basis. The trails through the passes varied with the seasons of the year and in the winter the trail would be marked in the snow to allow the returning party to find its way. Trade goods were carried by the traders themselves or on the backs of slaves who could also be traded at the end of the trail, adding an air of efficiency to the process. After the contact, the luxury of slavery ended and the Tlingit had to rely upon their dogs since other draught animals were unavailable.

The intricate system did not hold out long against the white traders and the white prospectors. Although the Tlingit were able, through the threat of violence, to hold the Russian traders at bay, the onslaught of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Americans after 1850 destroyed the trading relationships of the Indians along the coast.

The reluctance of the Indians to share this knowledge of the mountain passes, however, delayed the movement of whites into the interior; in the end when all else failed, the astute Chilkat and Chilkoot would exact a stinging, if short lived, tribute from the heavily laden stampeders who rushed to the gold fields.

The Hudson's Bay Company

As the Russian American Company had pushed eastward in the search for furs, the Hudson's Bay Company had pushed westward across the entire North American continent toward the same end. Robert Campbell was one of the company's most industrious explorers on the northwest frontier of the company's operation. In May 1840, under instructions from Sir George Simpson, he set out "to discover any large river flowing westward." Campbell worked his way up the Liard River, crossed the divide between the Mackenzie and Yukon River drainage basins, and soon found himself on the banks of a large river tending westward. The location he named Pelly Banks and the river he called the Pelly after Sir John Henry Pelly, the London Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. The explorers constructed a crude makeshift raft and floated a few miles down the Pelly, and it was only with great reluctance that Campbell turned his small party back toward Fort Frances on Frances Lake. Not until early in 1843 could he return to the Pelly better prepared to continue the exploration of the river. Some 300 miles west of Pelly Banks, Campbell camped at the confluence of the Pelly and another large river which he named for J. Lee Lewes.[14] With lowered spirits Campbell started the return journey but melancholy was soon replaced by fear and apprehension after an encounter with hostile Indians who shadowed the party's frantic progress back up the Pelly.[15]

When Sir George Simpson received the news of Campbell's discoveries, he was enthusiastic about the suitability of the confluence of the two large rivers for a new post, but in ordering Campbell to locate on the site, Simpson cautioned him against further exploration of the river to the coast. Simpson feared direct competitive contact with the Russians he knew were at the mouth of the Kwikhpak on the Alaskan coast, as Campbell's explorations had given credence to the suspicion that the Russians' Kwikhpak and Campbell's Pelly were of a common identity.[16]

Even before Campbell was subjected to Simpson's restrictions, John Bell, in charge of Fort Good Hope on the Mackenzie River, was encouraged by the search for the "Great River" which flowed to the Pacific, and began an exploration of the Peel River country in 1839. His efforts were rewarded by the discovery of a large river which, after flowing northward for some distance, made a great sweep to the west. In 1844 Bell followed the Porcupine which he named for the many bristling little beasts inhabiting its banks, to a river which he named the Yukon, his approximation of the Indian name for it.[17] It was at this magnificent confluence, well inside Russian territory, that despite Simpson's earlier fears, the Hudson's Bay Company constructed Fort Yukon in 1845.[18] The fort marked the furthest extent of Hudson's Bay Company exploration on the Yukon River.

Ironically, it was not until 1848 that Campbell finally received Simpson's blessings to establish a post at the confluence of the Lewes and Pelly rivers. On June 1, Campbell and his small party began to erect Fort Selkirk and in August, the new fort was visited by a band of 20 Chilkat Indians who had come inland from Lynn Canal, arriving by way of the Lewes on rafts. They had come to trade with the Athabascans, and as Campbell was poorly supplied for his wintering needs, he could do little but watch as the Chilkats left with the heavy bales of furs on their backs.[19]

Campbell's position regarding supplies was of great concern. Besides limiting his trade, the shortage had forced him to devise precautions should starvation threaten. His plan was to make for the coast on the river system into which the Lewes flowed. To this end he persuaded the Chilkat traders to carry a letter to Captain Dodd of the Hudson's Bay Company steamer the *Beaver* on the Pacific coast, designed to assure Campbell a favourable reception at the Russian trading posts.[20] This was in effect the first recorded white use of communication through the mountains to the coast, but it would be more than 30 years before the first white men would be allowed to walk unmolested through the passes.

It was Campbell's conviction that Forts Yukon and Selkirk were on the same river, and after the restrictions were removed, Campbell continued his exploration downstream in the spring of 1851. His arrival at Fort Yukon proved his conjectures correct: "the Pelly & the Youcon were identical"[21] or at least part of the same river system. Simpson was duly notified of the discovery by a returning party and the link between the northern and southern reaches was now complete.

The many problems relating to Fort Selkirk still remained and in 1851 a visiting band of Chilkats was only narrowly prevented from ransacking the post. Their return in 1852 proved the undoing of the fort. The store was pillaged and the post left in ruin, and as a result, the company decided to abandon the site in favour of Fort Yukon.[22] The presence of the Hudson's Bay Company on the upper Yukon, for which Campbell had worked so many years, was almost completely thwarted and even Fort Yukon would be abandoned in 1868 when it was determined that it was well within the boundaries of the newly acquired United States possession.[23]

Early Prospectors Open the Country

Rumours of gold had always plagued the Russians in their fur-trading efforts. The Hudson's Bay men had noticed gold. Campbell mentioned finding traces of it at Fort Selkirk, but no action followed.[24] Likewise, a Hudson's Bay Company clerk at Fort Yukon, in a letter to his parents in Toronto some years later wrote

> ...There is a small river not far from here that the minister, the Rev. McDonald, saw so much gold on a year or two ago that he could have gathered it with a spoon. I have often wished to go, but can never find the time. Should I find gold in paying quantities I may turn gold-digger, but this is merely a last resort when I can do no better.[25]

Such was the attitude of the fur traders who formed the advancing frontier of exploration in the country of the Yukon River. But there were others less concerned with furs and geographic knowledge, more mercenary perhaps, but with the same dogged determination for exploration that characterized the restless Robert Campbell.

In 1872 Arthur Harper, an unsuccessful veteran of several of the diggings in California and British Columbia, was drawn to the Yukon in his search for gold. His explorations took him from the Peace River to Fort Simpson where he entered the Yukon on the Hudson's Bay Company route via the Rat, Peel and Porcupine rivers. Prospects were promising for Harper but the real find eluded him and his search was temporarily distracted at Fort Yukon by specimens of native copper.[26]

Meanwhile, two prospectors whom Harper had met at Nelson Forks had been trading, rather than prospecting, above Fort Yukon. In the spring of 1873, the two prospectors, Leroy McQuesten and Albert Mayo, along with Harper and a few others, descended the Yukon to St. Michael. Returning with fresh supplies, McQuesten, as an agent for the Alaska Commercial Company, established a new trading post which he named Fort Reliance. The new post was only six miles from the Klondike River which would eventually prove to be a mecca for thousands of goldseekers.[27]

Harper re-supplied and continued his prospecting activities in the Yukon Basin, eventually throwing in his lot with the traders and giving up the full time search for gold. The stage was slowly being set for the grand entrance of the thousands. With the establishment of trading posts, the prospectors could now garner supplies from the fur traders store, albeit meager. The small steamer *Yukon*, the first on the mighty river, made its sometimes yearly supply trip up the Yukon River to supply the new post and the transient population to the coast with furs. An aura of reliability in provisioning surrounded the advent of this service which allowed a more concentrated effort by the prospectors.

Harper, McQuesten and Mayo continued to season their trading activities with sporadic prospecting trips and although Harper never made the big strike which he sought so diligently, his small successes did indicate a distribution of placer gold throughout the Yukon Basin. While wandering about the vast river system, both McQuesten and Harper continued to write enthusiastically of the prospects of the northern frontier in their many letters to friends on the "outside." Some of these letters reached the miners at Sitka who were prevented from entering the Territory only by the presence of hostile Indians who still guarded the passes into the interior from the head of Lynn Canal.

About the same time Harper and McQuesten were finding their way into the northeastern Yukon, Henry Tilbert and his partner were moving into the Cassiar district. In 1871 they found gold on the Liard River. Two years later Tilbert found gold in abundance on a creek that flowed in the north end of Dease Lake and which was named in his honour. By 1874, 1500 men were swarming over the Dease Lake area, and later that same year, gold was found on McDame Creek further to the north. In 1874 the total production of the Cassiar district was $1,000,000 while in 1875 it began to wane, amounting to $800,000 and would continue to decline. The short-lived Cassiar gold rush was over.[28]

The miners who continued to arrive in the Cassiar left as quickly, finding that the reports circulating on the outside were exaggerated and outdated. Through the last half of the 1870s, they sought gold in the multitude of creeks that drained northern British Columbia and the Alaska Panhandle. Sitka became the base of operations where men wintered and re-outfitted for the spring ventures. The Cassiar had become just one more in the chain of rushes that had led men northward from the gold fields of California since 1849.

These disgruntled miners congregated periodically in the rumour-infested saloons in Sitka where they eagerly received the optimistic musings filtering out of the Yukon from Harper and McQuesten. As yet the only white man to have made any use of the mountain passes was the Hudson's Bay Company's Robert Campbell. In the summer of 1848 he had sent a letter via the Chilkat traders over the route, but no white man had yet been allowed to climb the trail.[29]

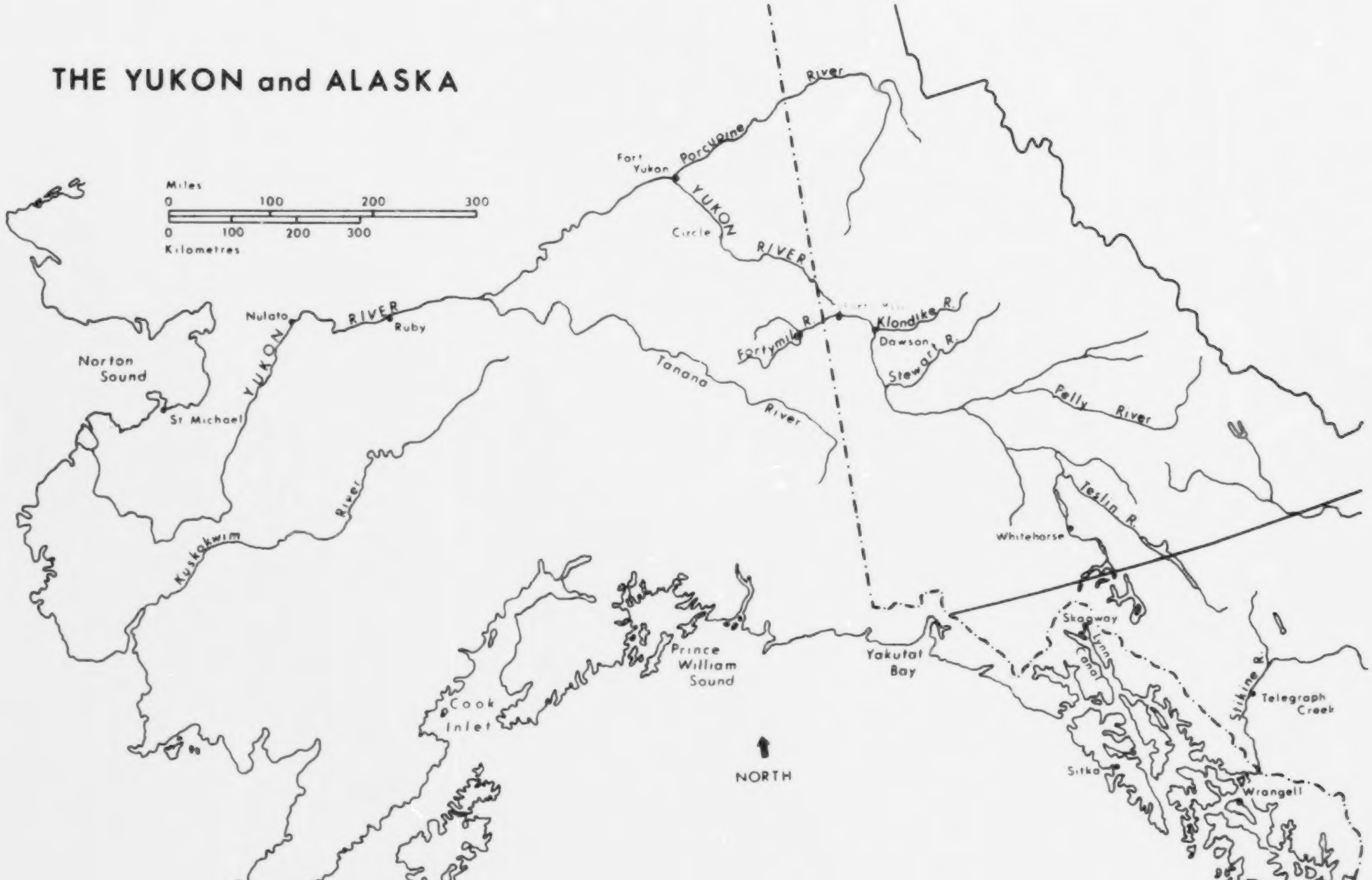
Sometime between 1875 and 1878 a little known prospector named George Holt climbed the steep, boulder-strewn slope over the Chilkoot Pass, becoming perhaps the first white man to cross into the interior from the Lynn Canal tidewater. Holt apparently returned to Sitka the same way, managing to evade the Indian protectors for a second time. In Sitka, Holt displayed some small nuggets he claimed to have found on the other side of the mountains. Apparently his trip had taken him as far as Marsh Lake (as yet unnamed) and the Hotalinqua or Tes-lin-too River, but subsequent searchers could not find the source of his gold and Holt was killed by Indians in Alaska before anyone could extract the information from him.[30]

Encouraged by Holt's embroidered tales, George Pilz led a group of men to the Chilkoot in 1878, but was forced to abandon his attempt to reach the upper Yukon by the hostile and now vigilant Indians who maintained their hold on the route. Then in September 1879, Captain L.A. Beardslee, Commander of the United States Navy's ship *Jamestown* and Senior Representative of the United States Government in Alaska, reported a number of events that were to change the pattern of access to the Yukon valley:

> ...About the 25th of September news was brought by Indian canoes that there had been a big fight up in the Chilkat country, between two families of the Chilkats, viz, the Klockwatories (warriors) and the Onoochtades, and that the chief of the former, Klotz-kutch [sic] (who is head chief of the tribe), was seriously wounded, and that a number on both sides had been killed; the inciting cause having been a barrel of molasses with which Klotz-kutch had given a pot-a-lach.[31]

Considering the Indian disturbances a threat to American interests in that region, Beardslee sent a party of 30 friendly Indians led by Dick and Sitka Jack, two Indian constables from Sitka, to the "Chilkat country." The party's task was twofold. They were to mollify the rebellious Indians as a favour to the wounded Klotz-Kutch who, it was hoped, would gratefully grant concessions for the passage of white traders and miners into the interior. Beardslee's message to Klotz-Kutch emphasized the gold potential of the country, which he assured the chief would enrich the Indians as well as the white miners. His efforts were generated by the fear that failing the success of the peaceful negotiations, the miners themselves would force their way through the pass, resulting in uncontrollable complications.[32]

THE YUKON and ALASKA


Miles
0
100
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300
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100
200
300
Kilometres
Norton Sound
St Michael
Nulato
YUKON
RIVER
Ruby
Fort Yukon
Porcupine
River
YUKON
Circle
RIVER
Fortymile R.
Klondike R.
Dawson
Stewart R.
Tanana
River
Kuskokwim
River
Pelly River
Teslin R.
Whitehorse
Skagway
Lynn
Canal
Yakutat Bay
Prince William Sound
Cook Inlet
NORTH
Sitka
Wrangell
Stikine R.
Telegraph Creek

In February 1880 the Indian policing party returned to Sitka with an invitation from Klotz-Kutch. The miners lost no time in preparing for the expedition. The necessary vessels were constructed for the journey and the group of 19 miners led by Edmund Bean pledged to act as "sober, reasonable men," refraining from all trade of spirituous liquor to the Indians. The five small boats set sail up Lynn Canal on May 20, 1880. The accompanying naval escort consisted of 13 sailors and two Indian constables commanded by Lieutenant McClelland. In addition to small arms for each of the escort party, the force was equipped with the "Gatling gun" should the employment of "gunboat diplomacy" prove necessary.

This formidable force proceeded to Pyramid Harbour where arrangements were made for a meeting with the Chilkat chiefs.

> A general talk then ensued, the miners offering fair wages, and an arrangement was made by which the Indians were to pack some of the goods across the land to the Chilkat Inlet, instead of up the Chilkat River and across the divide by that way. Having finished everything satisfactorily and the best of feelings seeming between the miners and the Indians,...I bid farewell to the miners, and wishing them luck in their search for gold, proceeded...[33]

Beardlsee next heard of the Bean party from an Indian messenger who reported that the party had reached the headwaters of the Yukon and were busily engaged building boats on the shores of "a lake" for the continuation of their journey down the Yukon.[34]

The Edmund Bean party was the first large contingent to have crossed the Chilkoot. The miners spent less than one month on the shores of "the lake" (apparently Lake Lindeman) and on July 4, 1880, they began their descent of the river system. The small knot of men, typical of a group of individualistic propsectors, soon parted, going their separate ways. Three of the men became the first to run the white-water complex later known as Miles Canyon and White Horse Rapids, but the majority of them reached the Teslin River and ascended it, where they found encouraging traces of gold. Two other men entered the Yukon on the heels of the Bean party, but it is not known how many of the other miners in Sitka followed them.[35] The men invariably left the country early to avoid being caught by winter storms.

The following year, two of the miners who had accompanied Bean returned with two other miners. They reached the Big Salmon River finding flecks of gold called "colours" along the entire 200-mile ascent as well as gold in paying quantities on some of the sand bars. Despite the previous prospects in the district, George Mercer Dawson later considered these finds to be the first discoveries of "paying placers" in the Yukon.[36]

In 1882 miners wintering at Juneau, a new mining town which had replaced Sitka as the miners' headquarters, again prepared to ascend the Chilkoot, spurred on by the discoveries of the previous season. Probably 20 or more men crossed the Chilkoot to the upper Yukon River that year.[37] Prospectors spread out, working the Pelly River for the first time.[38] That year miners found their way down the Yukon to McQuesten's Fort Reliance for the first time, extending the route through the Chilkoot to the lower river. To the lonely trader's great joy, 12 miners decided for the first time to winter over instead of returning to the "outside." They built cabins nearby and were able to meet at McQuesten's store in the long evenings of the winter of 1882-83. This was the beginning of a tradition that would eventually become the basis of the Yukon Order of Pioneers.[39] More importantly, the 1880s saw the establishment of the Chilkoot Pass as a viable route to the promising gold-bearing rivers of the Yukon River system. In fact, the Chilkoot was one of the most important links in the chain. In limited numbers men could enter the Yukon by way of the short Chilkoot trail and expect to provision themselves at established fur-trading posts along the river. This enabled them to spend more time prospecting and exploring the country, which in turn increased the likelihood of a major find, and should a find trigger a rush, these "resident" miners would form the vanguard.

Scientific Explorers Chart the Chilkoot Pass

Arthur Krause, Geographer and Anthropologist

The unknown nature of the expanses of the Yukon River valley was not only attractive to the individualistic prospectors, but also to a different breed of explorer. The first of these to attempt to map the route from Lynn Canal to the upper Yukon River was William Healy Dall, a name synonymous with early Alaskan exploration. He had joined the Russian American Telegraph Expedition in 1865. Shortly after the American purchase of Alaska, Dall explored the Yukon River valley through Alaska, the information from which was made available to the general public and the scientific community in his *Alaska and Its Resources*, published in 1870.[40]

Dall was aware of the route leading into the interior from Lynn Canal, although he did not traverse it. His map of 1870 shows the Chilkat trail swinging westward in an arc from the northwest extremity of Lynn Canal to Lake Laberg.[41] Dall noted that the Chilkaht-tena inhabiting the "Chilkaht" River valley were intelligent enterprising traders.[42] They carried Russian goods over the Chilkaht Portage to the Lewes River in a 20-day trip.[43] The area of Dall's map through which the Chilkoot trail would be established was blank and the geography of the upper Lewes or Yukon River and the chain of lakes are indistinct. Nevertheless, William Dall was perhaps the first explorer to map the mountain route.

The first of the scientific explorers to be stationed in the northern Lynn Canal area arrived only two years after Beardslee had assured unmolested passage through the Chilkoot Pass. The geographers Arthur and Aurel Krause had been sent to the northern Pacific by the Geographical Society of Bremen. Immediately after completing their assignment in Siberia, the brothers stationed themselves at the fur-trading community of Chilkat in southeastern Alaska. It was here they commenced their intensive studies of the little-known Tlingit Indians.

Although Aurel Krause left in April 1882, Arthur stayed and twice penetrated the northern mountains into Canadian territory, becoming the first scientific explorer to do so. His initial trip in the company of two Chilkat Indians took him up the Taiya River valley. Following this river on foot and with their supplies on their backs, the small Krause expedition climbed the steep Chilkoot Pass in May of 1882 under unfavourable snow conditions. The summit was gained on May 28. After a rapid descent to Crater Lake, Krause followed the still frozen chain of lakes north to the Indians' Schutluch Lake (probably Lake Lindeman). There Krause encountered prospectors who had crossed the Chilkoot, building boats in anticipation of the spring breakup.

Krause made one more incursion into Canada, but the second trip was made via the Chilkat Pass farther to the west. The Chilkat would also play a part, albeit less dramatic, in the gold rush. Arthur Krause's scientific exploration of these southern gold rush trails resulted in reports and maps that were long appreciated by the scientific community.[44] George Dawson, the Dominion surveyor, incorporated the information into his own maps of his Yukon exploration in the years following.[45] Although Krause's report was not heralded with the fanfare accompanying Frederick Schwatka's work, it was quietly circulated and men like Dawson were able to put the information to extensive use.

Schwatka Begins the Legend of the Chilkoot

The fame of the Chilkoot awaited a more colourful character than Arthur Krause. General Nelson A. Miles was intrigued by the vast unknown acquisition and had for some time tried unsuccessfully to gain funds from the United States government for the exploration of Alaska. In a thinly disguised attempt to circumvent another congressional refusal, Miles ordered his aide, First Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka, to carry out a military reconnaissance of Alaska on the grounds that the "frequent clashes" between the Indians and whites constituted a threat to the security of American territory.

Schwatka was a flamboyant individual, well-suited for the purposes of General Miles. He had graduated from West Point in 1871 and while serving at various army bases, had acquired degrees in medicine and law. In 1879-80 he gained the reputation as an arctic explorer when he led a belated search for the lost Franklin expedition.[46]

Schwatka began his "reconnaissance" in May 1883 with strict orders regarding economy and confidentiality. Later he would recall that the expedition "stole away like a thief in the night" with a budget smaller than would be required to publish their report.[47] June 2, 1883 saw the party disembarking from their ship at Pyramid Harbour. Then ensued lengthy negotiations with the Chilkat concerning the price of packing. The shrewd Indians had obviously decided to replace their earnings from the disrupted trade by charging substantial tolls for packing and for allowing the white man to use their traditional routes.

The expedition proceeded slowly up the Lynn Canal in the small steam launch *Louise*, towing 20 canoes full of Chilkat packers and their packs. The "highly paid" entourage camped near the mouth of the "dayay" (Taiya) River, sorting and assigning the packs which "varied from thirty-six to a hundred and thirty-seven pounds in weight."[48]

The supplies, over two tons, were to be packed by the Chilkats at the apparently exorbitant price of 9-12¢ per pound.[49] The immense difficulty of the trail made the price appear less dear with each of the many forced crossings of the swift, icy Taiya River. Undaunted, cheerful, steadily earning their employers' respect by physical stamina, the Chilkat packers plodded to the foot of Schwatka's Perrier Pass.[50] At 5 A.M., only two or three days from the coast, the final ascent began:

> Up banks almost perpendicular they scrambled on their hands and knees, helping themselves by every projecting rock and clump of juniper and dwarf spruce, not even refusing to use their teeth on them at the worst places. Along the steep snow banks and the icy fronts of glaciers steps were cut with knives, while rough alpenstocks from the valley helped them to maintain their footing. In some such places the incline was so steep that those having boxes on their backs cut scratches in the icy crust with the corners as they passed along, and oftentimes it was possible to steady one's self by the open palm of the hand resting against the snow. In some of these places a single mis-step, or the caving in of a foot-hold would have sent the unfortunate traveler many hundred feet headlong to certain destruction. Yet not the slightest accident happened, and about ten o'clock, almost exhausted, we stood on the top of the pass, enveloped in a cold drifting fog, 4200 feet above the level of the sea (a small portion of the party having found a lower crossing at 4100 feet above sea level). How these small Indians, not apparently averaging over one hundred and forty pounds in weight, could carry one hundred pounds up such a precipitous mountain of ice and snow, seems marvelous beyond measure. One man carried one hundred and thirty-seven pounds, while boys from twelve to fourteen carried from fifty to seventy pounds.[51]

With this apparently superhuman effort, Schwatka's military reconnaissance entered Canada. The rapid descent from the summit brought the party to a small "crater-like" lake which Schwatka named Crater Lake. The terrain was barren and treeless, with nothing but projecting granite and snow reminiscent of an arctic landscape. From Crater Lake at "the very head of the Yukon," the trail followed a valley, "passing by a few small picturesque lakes on our left,...we caught sight of the main lake in the afternoon, and in a few hours were upon its banks at a point where a beautiful mountain stream came tumbling in."[52] This "main" lake was named Lake Lindeman in honour of Dr. Lindeman of Breman Geographical Society.[53] The Indians considered their contracts concluded at this point and were anxious to be paid. Many left immediately for the Lynn Canal, leaving the expedition on its own.

Unknown to Schwatka, he had not traversed any new ground, for Arthur Krause had already thoroughly explored this portion of the route and circulated his finding quietly through the scientific community. He learned from the Stick (Tagish) Indians, a few of whom had accompanied him over the Chilkoot, that Lindeman emptied into a short river through which, according to the Indians, only a small raft could pass and certainly not the raft Schwatka intended to build. A small quantity of their provisions was entrusted to the Indians who offered two frail bark canoes as an alternative to packing. Doubtful of their success in the "rickety little boats," Schwatka bitterly observed:

> ...we did not see anything of them or their owners until three days later, when the men came creeping back overland - the gale still raging - to explain matters which required no explanation.[54]

With only a few alternatives available, Schwatka began the construction of his raft.

> ...a raft made of the somewhat formidable dimensions of fifteen by thirty feet, with an elevated deck amidships. The rope lashings used on the loads of the Indian packers were put to duty in binding the logs together, but the greatest reliance was placed in stout wooden pins which united them by auger holes bored through both logs....A deck was made on the corduroy plan of light seasoned pine poles, and high enough to prevent ordinary sized waves from wetting the effects, while a pole was rigged by mortising it into one of the central logs at the bottom and supporting it by four guy ropes from the top, and from this was suspended a wall tent as a sail, the ridge pole being the yard arm, with tackling arranged to raise and lower it. A large bow and stern oar with which to do the steering completed the rude craft. On the evening of the 14th of June the raft was finished,...[55]

The "rude" craft was considerably more sophisticated and substantial than many that would eventually follow. Despite the careful engineering of the craft, however, the voyage along the length of Lake Lindeman was fraught with problems for the three-man crew. Subsequently the raft was enlarged and improved after the trying passage through Payer Rapids.[56] Working in icy water and constantly plagued by the buzzing, stinging hordes of mosquitoes, the raft was strengthened and expanded to 16 by 42 feet.

On the morning of June 19 the journey was resumed. Schwatka compared Lake Bennett, surrounded by "Iron-capped Mountains," to the coastal inside passage.[57] Despite its obvious beauty, there was little shelter afforded along the sparsely treed shore of Lake Bennett and the wind-washed waves over the stern of the boat made travel rapid but wet and extremely uncomfortable. The peculiar construction of the raft, which had no long logs running the entire length, worked "like an accordian," giving its charges cause for apprehension.[58]

The following day the raft was modified again in a small cove. Logs of the required length were found and added to give the required rigidity to the craft. On June 21 the much interrupted journey was once again resumed and by late afternoon the northern outlet of Lake Bennett was reached. In naming this narrowing between the two larger lakes, Schwatka abandoned his European and American acquaintances, choosing Caribou Crossing for the Indian name for "the place where the caribou cross." Leaving the crossing, lamenting the lack of caribou at that time of year, the party proceeded into Nares Lake on the strength of their government issue pork.[59] Once through the small lake, a much larger body of water was entered named Bove Lake (Tagish Lake).[60] This put the voyagers once again at the mercy of the incessant wind.

The change in the stands of timber along Bove Lake impressed Schwatka. He realized their commercial worth but was probably unnecessarily impressed because of his difficulty finding suitable timber for his raft on Lake Lindeman. Passing Lake "Takko" (Taku Arm) in the afternoon, they were soon into another river of considerable length. It was along this river (Tagish River) that Schwatka observed "a tolerably well built 'Stick' house," the only sign of habitation along the route.[61]

Tagish River flowed out of Tagish Lake, taking the raft into shallow Marsh Lake, a uniform 18 inches deep at Schwatka's passing.[62] The valley through which they had been travelling broadened out at Marsh Lake into open-grassed prairie dried a dusty yellow before the spring's new growth.

Schwatka proceeded with some apprehension into the outlet of Marsh Lake which the explorer labelled the Yukon River on his maps.[63] The caution was generated by the Indian tales of a great and impassable rapid that lay ahead. After the relatively uneventful passage down the lakes, Schwatka eagerly anticipated the forthcoming excitement, but the source of the change from the monotony of Marsh Lake lay more than 50 miles down the river and not the four or five miles from the end of Marsh Lake as he had been led to believe by his Indian guides. On July 1, 1883, four days out of Marsh Lake, a frantically gesticulating Indian guide warned of an imminent danger as the raft approached the "grand Cannon of the Yukon":

> A laborious survey of three or four hours duration, exposed to heat and mosquitoes revealed that the rapids were about five miles long...The Yukon River, which had previously been about three hundred or three hundred and fifty yards in width, gradually contracts as it nears the upper gate of the canyon and at the point where the stream enters it in a high white-capped water, I do not believe exceeds one-tenth of that distance...Through this narrow corrugated rock the wild water of the great river rushed perfect mass of milk-like foam...[64]

Yet the canyon was only the beginning of the plunging water:

> At the northern outlet of the cannon, the rushing river spreads rapidly into its former width, but abates not a jot of its swiftness, and flows in a white and shallow sheet over reefs of bowlders [sic] and bars thickly studded with intertwining drifts of huge timber, ten times more dangerous for a boat or raft than the narrow cannon itself...[65]

The raft, with only a skeleton crew, was sent through the rapids in one quick foamy shot, arriving at the other end with relatively little damage. The long logs on one side had been torn away by a collision with the side of the canyon. Greatly relieved, the men set to work repairing the damage and portaging the supplies around the obstacle while their leader enjoyed the sport of the greyling which abounded in the river. The necessary repairs made, the journey was resumed.

On August 6, 1883, not quite two months after leaving salt water, Schwatka's party was towed into St. Michael by the Alaska Commercial Company's steamer *Yukoner*.The exploration of the mighty river had been made quickly and without major mishap. The significance of Schwatka's exploration lay not in the fact that he was the first to make such a trip, but in the fact that he had provided the first survey of the principal route of the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897-98. Another accomplishment of dubious character lay in Schwatka's arrogant disregard for the existing nomenclature of geographic features that lay along his surveyed route. He ignored the fact that the Indian inhabitants, miners and traders had named many features, as well as the fact that even though the boundaries were disputed, a sizeable portion of his route lay through Canadian territory, albeit geographically uncertain. Nonetheless, subsequent publicity of the expeditions caught the imagination of North American and the armchair geographers of the world.[66]

William Ogilvie, Dominion Land Surveyor

Between the end of Schwatka's expedition and Dawson's expedition in 1887, prospecting activity intensified with more and more men moving into the Yukon. Before 1887 discussions had already taken place between William H. Dall of the United States Geological Survey and George M. Dawson of the Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada.[67] Dall was a long-time advocate of the systematic approach to northwest exploration, and Dawson had been moved by the expeditions of Krause and Schwatka. Both agreed that an official survey was needed. The ever-increasing activity in the Yukon district made the situation of an undetermined international boundary more and more intolerable.

The Canadian government, disturbed by the incursion of the American military expedition and the free-handed labelling of Canadian geographical features by Schwatka, was more receptive to the urgings of Dawson. In 1887 Thomas White, Canadian Minister of the Interior, authorized the organization of an expedition to undertake the exploration of the Yukon River drainage basin. George Dawson was to be in charge of the Yukon Expedition, a three-fronted campaign. Dawson himself would run a survey line from the Cassiar District in northern British Columbia through the Dease, upper Liard and Frances rivers, and from there to the Pelly River and into the Yukon River. The route would nearly duplicate that which Robert Campbell had followed into the Yukon district more than 30 years before. R.G. McConnell was charged with the survey of the Stikine River, the lower Liard and subsequently ordered to pass the winter of 1887-88 on the Mackenzie. In the spring of 1888 McConnell was to descend the Mackenzie and make his way to the Yukon and Lewes River via the northern extremity of the Rocky Mountains and the Porcupine River. His return to the south, after ascending the Lewes River, was planned by way of one of the mountain passes to the Pacific coast at Lynn Canal. Finally, William Ogilvie was to survey a line from Lynn Canal across the Chilkoot Pass to the Lewes River and the mighty Yukon. The prime objective of exploration was to ascertain the exact location of the 141st meridian on the Yukon River. Subsequently, having wintered on the Yukon, he was to continue his survey to the northeast and the Mackenzie in the spring of 1888. Dawson was convinced that the three different traverses would provide the best opportunity of adding to the knowledge of the Yukon district in light of the ever-increasing activity regarding the placer gold mining.[68]

William Ogilvie, who would spend a great many years in the Yukon as an enthusiastic advocate and head of government, began his survey on Pyramid Island. The position of the island fixed, the party proceeded up Chilkoot Inlet to the mouth of the Taiya River, reaching that point on June 2, 1887.

Preparations were made to take the supplies and instruments through the mountains to Lake Lindeman. Like those who had preceded him, Ogilvie had problems convincing the Indians to pack at "reasonable" rates. The Chilkats had learned that the survey party was English and due to an injury, the loss of a son of one of the chiefs at the hands of the English some years earlier, the price soared to $20 per 100 pounds. The chief was determined the surveyors should pay the exorbitant rate to appease the injury. Commander Newell of the United States Navy intervened, threatening punishment by the Great Father at Washington and the Indians backed down. The price then agreed upon was $10 per 100 pounds.[69]

After the protracted negotiations, 120 Indian packers, men, women and children, started for the summit with two members of the survey party to secure the provisions and equipment at the final destination. The departure of the packers did not end the problems. Each of the packers had been given a ticket that would be presented to the government official and receipted for payment. Claiming to have lost the tickets, the packers often presented themselves for payment a second time, "producing first the receipted ticket, afterwards the one they claimed to have lost, demanding pay for both."[70] Generally the Indians gave Ogilvie a difficult time. He was of the opinion that had Commander Newell not been in the Inlet to watch the proceedings, the aggressive nature of the Indians would have been more difficult to handle.[71]

Ogilvie continued his measurements as his party worked its way up the approach to the pass. From angles and measurements he was able to determine the elevation of the Taiya (Chilkoot) Pass as 3378 feet above the head of canoe navigation on the Taiya River. The height of the latter was estimated at 124 feet above sea level by Dawson, which made Ogilvie's elevation of the Pass 3502 feet above sea level. The elevation of Lindeman was also determined by readings from an aneroid barometer at 2145 feet above sea level.[72]

The Indian packers hired at the coast deserted Ogilvie's party at the summit, leaving the party to its own devices. Ogilvie's men suffered immeasurably, packing the goods from the summit to Lake Lindeman. Unaccustomed to the work, the surveyors suffered from snow blindness and numerous other complaints relating to physical exhaustion. The futility of their efforts and the subsequent waste of the valuable summer season was soon realized. Ogilvie prevailed upon a man "of influence with the Tagish tribe" (George Carmack) to procure packers at $5 per 100 pounds for the remaining supplies. Even at this attractive price, the Tagish Indians were hesitant due to their fear of the possible retaliation for the infringement of the Tlingit monopoly. Ogilvie, his patience at an end, exhorted the Tagish Indians to exercise their rights:

> After considerable ridicule of their cowardice, and explanation of the fact that they had the exclusive right to all work in their own country, the country on the north side of the coast range admitted by the coast Indians to belong to the Tagish tribe just as the coast tribes had the privilege of doing all the work on the coast side of the mountains, and that one of their number

> was already working with me unmolested, and likely to continue so, nine of them came over, and in fear and trembling began to pack down to the lake.[73]

The Chilkoot quite readily joined the Tagish packers and with only one minor disruption the goods arrived at the shore of Lindeman. The surveyors then moved their goods in two Peterborough canoes to the foot of the lake and portaged it to the head of Lake Bennett. Only then could the men begin to search for timber for the necessary boats. It took several days to find timber of the dimensions required, as trees around the upper end of the lake were small and scrubby. On July 12 a portion of the party was sent down the lakes with instructions to examine the "canon" and establish a base of supply at its lower end.

While in Juneau, Ogilvie heard rumours of a lower pass from the Chilkoot Inlet to the headwaters of the Yukon River. Inquiries from people at the mouth of the Taiya River convinced Ogilvie of the existence of this pass, but he could discover little else about it.[74]

In Ogilvie's party was a long-time riverboat operator and prospector, Captain William Moore, who had been involved in the British Columbia gold rush, acquiring and losing fortunes in the transportation business. Through his son Bernard Moore, Captain Moore had heard of the lower pass and on the basis of these rumours, this adventuresome entrepreneur conceived a new transportation scheme to rekindle his lost fortunes.[75] Both Ogilvie and Moore were anxious to ascertain the nature of this pass.

From reports of the Chilkoot Pass, Ogilvie had concluded it was unsuitable for the construction of road or railroad, but this new "lower" pass sounded more promising. Ogilvie decided to send Moore to reconnoitre it. Again, the usual problem with the natives arose. The Chilkoot Indians refused to accompany Moore and disclaimed all knowledge of the pass. This led Ogilvie to assume they wished to keep its existence a secret; as a result, curiosity was heightened. The Tagish Indians, on the other hand, would not accompany the proposed expedition because of their fear of the Chilkoot Indians. After a long series of negotiations, a Tagish Indian named Jim, later to gain fame as "Skookum" Jim, was persuaded to accompany Moore. Jim had already been through the pass and was "reliable and useful."[76]

Moore discovered the pass at the head of the Skagway River 18 miles from tidewater and a further 22 - 23 miles from the summit to the interior lake (Bove or Tagish Lake). The "new" pass was, according to Moore, heavily timbered all the way over the summit. Ogilvie estimated the elevation of the new pass at about 2500 feet above sea level. The pass was named by Ogilvie for the Minister of the Interior, the Honourable Thomas White. Although longer, the White Pass route was considerably lower and gave added impetus to the imaginative plans of Captain Moore for a wagon road or railroad to the heart of the Yukon district.

While this important discovery was taking place, Ogilvie and the remaining men continued the tedious survey of the lakes. The work was made more difficult by the wind which blew increasingly from the coast, creating a heavy swell which made travel difficult and the numerous necessary landings most troublesome and wet. The survey could only proceed at a slow ten miles per day. After eight days on the lakes, the surveyors reached the canyon. The advance party had reached the obstacle two days before and were awaiting Ogilvie's arrival before attempting to run the white water.

With all the predictable caution of a senior civil servant, Ogilvie examined the canyon before he equipped each man with a life preserver and proceeded down through the canyon. One of the canoes manned by two of the surveyors "jumped about a great deal more than they thought it would."[77] Ogilvie, in the larger boat, made similar observations in the three-minute trip at an estimated speed of 12 1/2 miles per hour.

Ever observant, the Dominion Land Surveyor measured the total length of the canyon at five-eighths of a mile divided in two by a circular basin, with steep sloping sides about 100 feet high and about 150 yards in diameter. Below the basin the "fall" was greater, making the water rougher. The walls of the canyon were perpendicular, consisting of hexagonal columnar basalt. The second part of the obstacle was made up of three-eights of a mile of turbulent water, called the Whitehorse Rapids by the miners. The most dangerous rapids in the Yukon, Ogilvie considered them too treacherous to attempt to run "except by accident":

> Confined by low basaltic banks which, at the foot, suddenly close in and make the channel about 30 yards wide. It is here the danger lies, as there is a sudden drop and the water rushes through at tremendous rate, leaping and seething like a cataract.[78]

Confirmation of Ogilvie's judgement was provided in the miners' efforts to avoid running the white water. A series of three portages had been established to avoid the worst sections of the rapid complex. One short portage had been made around an unusually swift section of the river between the canyon and the rapids. Here, as early as the summer of 1887, a windlass had been constructed to haul boats up a very steep incline. This was the rude beginning of the mechanization of transport along the upper Yukon. In later years both sides of the canyon would be occupied by tramways to help the thousands of miners avoid the dangers of inundation.

Ogilvie's major objective was to determine the position of the 141st meridian where it crossed the Yukon River, a point that lay many miles to the west. To that end, progress on the river as opposed to the stormy lakes was increased twofold. In late August Ogilvie was at the White River and only a day later the confluence of the Stewart was sighted. In September the survey party met the old Yukoners McQuesten and Harper at the mouth of the Fortymile River where they were building a new trading post. Less than a week out of Forty Mile, Ogilvie reached his goal, established winter quarters and spent the extremely cold winter making observations for the determination of the International boundary.[79] The following spring, his task completed, Ogilvie left the Yukon country by way of the Porcupine River, returning south on the Mackenzie River.

William Ogilvie's Canadian Yukon expedition was more significant for its contribution to the general knowledge of the Yukon than had been the expedition of Frederick Schwatka. Ogilvie had established survey stations along the entire length of the Canadian section of the Yukon River. The elevations of the Chilkoot Pass and Lake Lindeman were determined. As a direct result of the Ogilvie expedition, Captain William Moore had discovered and reconnoitred the White Pass. Finally, of perhaps less importance, the historic figures of George W. Carmack and "Skookum" Jim appeared in the records of the Yukon district.

GOLD IN THE YUKON, 1887-96

Early Prospecting

While men like Schwatka and Ogilvie pushed back the frontiers of geographic knowledge in the Yukon, many nameless miners sought more specific information about individual rivers and creeks. Their explorations increased steadily through the 1880s. In 1884 the Cassiar Bar was discovered on the Yukon River 27 miles below the mouth of the Teslin River.[1] Although this discovery was not spectacular, it yielded $30 per day for those who laboured over the pans of sand and water.

In April 1885 a party of miners led by Thomas Boswell pulled their sleds up the still frozen Stewart River. Firing test holes in the frozen sand bars, they marked those that showed promise and kept on searching for the "big strike." About 90 miles from the mouth of the river a bar, later named Chapman Bar, yielded so well that the party paused to work it for the remainder of the summer. The $100 a day that the men earned was nothing short of extraordinary, considering the crude methods of recovery.[2] The activity on Chapman Bar was by-passed by another party of four miners who made substantial finds only seven miles farther up the Stewart River. The yield from this latter bar, the Steamboat Bar, was $35,000. By the summer of 1886, news of the Stewart River gold had reached the oustide and 100 seasoned miners made their way in to work the new diggings. The total yield of the Stewart River was in excess of $100,000 by the end of the 1886 season.

That same year, two brothers, Franklin and Henry Madison, visited and examined the Stewart River. They were not impressed by the amount of gold being worked out. Franklin remarked that "he did not like the kind of trees that grew on the bars, and that gold was never found where wild onions and leeks grew," and for that reason, continued his search northward.[3] These off-hand remarks were followed by an exploration of the Fortymile River, located downstream on the Yukon. Their subsequent efforts were well rewarded with the discovery of coarse gold in the gravels overlaying the bedrock. The discovery was made about 23 miles from the mouth of the Fortymile, putting it just inside American territory. The long-sought find of coarse gold drew the miners from the Stewart like a magnet. By the spring of 1887, the Stewart River diggings were all but deserted. The excitement at Forty Mile induced Harper and McQuesten to move their post to the mouth of that river.

The growth of the mining centre was slow but steady as discoveries on tributary creeks enlarged the gold field and increased gold production. Continued association with the Yukon conditions resulted in an improvement in the methods of working the stubborn permafrost. The mining season could then be extended, providing the season for increased numbers of prospecting and wintering miners. For several years after

A portion of the Skagway waterfront, 1898. (Public Archives Canada.)

the initial strike, there were about 300 miners on the Fortymile.[4] In response to increasing demand, the Alaska Commercial Company had launched the new and larger steamer *Arctic* in 1889, but the small steamer could haul only enough supplies to winter about 100 miners.[5] The remainder were forced to leave the country. Those leaving each fall had a choice of poling their boats up the Yukon to the Chilkoot Pass or the less strenuous drift to St. Michael where chance might provide a steamer bound for the west coast of the United States.

For those who stayed, isolation was the major problem. Mail service was all but nonexistent with mail arriving by steamer once a year. On the other hand, letters could be sent to the outside with outgoing miners, but these were relatively few and they were often reluctant to accept the added responsibility. Meaningful correspondence with those left on the outside was impossible. This isolation of the mining community, if without solution, could be eased by that forerunner of civilization, the saloon. The first of these inevitable establishments was opened in Forty Mile in 1889. Later the advancing front of civilization brought momentary relief from the solitude as the occasional repertory or vaudeville troupes travelled through for the miners' amusements.[6] Such was the self-imposed lot of the early miners.

Well-paying discoveries were made on the tributaries of Sixtymile River, which curled away from the Yukon toward the country of the Fortymile River. The activity generated another of Arthur Harper's trading posts and a few tents and cabins. These meager beginnings of settlement were named by Harper, under his newly formed policy to name new posts for government officials, after the Dominion Land Surveyor, William Ogilvie.

In 1894 the Reverend MacDonald's legendary gold by the "spoonful" was discovered on Birch Creek near the present site of Circle City, Alaska. At this point on the Yukon, about 140 miles downstream from Forty Mile, McQuesten built his two-storey trading post, persistently following the successful prospectors whom he had so generously grubstaked. The 1895 "clean-up" totalled about $400,000, a rich forerunner of what would shortly follow.[7] These major discoveries enticed an ever-increasing number of self-styled "journeymen" miners into the Yukon valley. William Ogilvie, confident about the potential of the country, observed that the prospecting activities were greatly hampered by "nature" itself and the lack of transportation, yet the incentive for the required development lay undiscovered.

Nevertheless, the transportation situation was improving. By 1895 the Alaska Commercial Company and the North American Trading and Transportation Company had increased their warehouse facilities at Circle City. The Alaska Commercial Company had three steamboats on the the Yukon: the *Alice*, the *Bella* and the reliable little *Arctic*. The latter was under the command of the erstwhile explorer, Captain William Moore. The North American Trading and Transportation Company had just recently launched the *John J. Healy* to accompany the *Porteous B. Weare* on the river. As a consequence, greater quantities of freight were carried as far up river as Fort Selkirk.

Meanwhile, the southern entrance to the Yukon still represented an arduous trek into the country. The trading company of Healy and Wilson operated a pack train service from the port of Dyea to Sheep Camp, halfway to the summit of the Chilkoot Pass. From Sheep Camp, a natural stopping point, the trail was impassable for loaded horses. Hence the Indian packers enjoyed the beginning of a very brief prosperity as they packed miners' outfits to the lakes for one cent a pound.[8] This was less than Schwatka had paid, but was considered exorbitant by the patrons of the service.

More sophisticated prospecting demanded the use of horses as draft animals, but these were in short supply in that inaccessible country. A few were brought over the Chilkoot in an innovative if inhumane manner. The "dog puncher" Arthur Walden was an observer to the procedure in early 1896:

> Horses were fastened in a rope sling and led up the trail on a long rope, with a hundred men or more to each horse, until the horses lost their footing, when they were hauled up to the summit lying on their sides. They were then led through the sharp cut, blind folded, backed over the edge, and slid down the other slope on their backs to Crater Lake, some four hundred feet below.[9]

Their rough entry into the Yukon valley was perhaps a fitting introduction to the short, hard, mosquito-infested life they would lead in the gold camps. The long, cold winter with insufficient feed meant a brief useful life for the doomed animals.

By 1895 a semblance of stability had begun to come to the Yukon. The North West Mounted Police had arrived at Forty Mile with 20 men. Canadian sovereignty was now a tangible entity in the form of the undermanned but substantial Fort Constantine at Cudahy downstream from the Fortymile River. This was the Yukon valley on the eve of the "discovery."

The Discovery

The participants in the unfolding drama of the Klondike came from the far-flung corners of North America. Robert Henderson, a Nova Scotian by birth, had chased gold all over the globe as a sailor before he arrived in the Yukon. At Ogilvie in 1894, he encountered Joe Ladue, a trading associate of McQuesten and Harper. Ladue's enduring belief in the potential riches of the country encouraged Henderson to explore the virgin soil of the Indian River area. Alone, for his partners deserted him at this point as they preferred the proven diggings at Circle City, Henderson headed expectantly for the new river. Indian River paralleled the now famous Klondike River, separated by a ridge 26 miles wide which would later be called the King Solomon Dome.

The laborious thawing of test holes in the frozen gravel and mud yielded only colours during the winter of 1894-95. Through the spring and summer of 1895, Henderson worked sections of Quartz Creek and Australia Creek, both tributaries of Indian River, but with very little encouragement for his gruelling work. The summer's prospecting had nearly spelled the end of the prospector's life. He spent 14 days in a lonely camp recovering from a severe wound received when he fell off a makeshift log bridge, skewering his leg on the sharp stump of a branch. Following his recovery, he paddled his handmade moosehide boat down to the mouth of Quartz Creek which he ascended once again. Nearly 18 days of exhaustive work building a dam and sluicing gravel netted a paltry $13. Discouraged, Henderson returned to Ogilvie and very shortly was back on the creek with a partner who stayed until the supplies ran out. Once again Henderson made the trip into Ogilvie and once again returned to Quartz Creek alone with a year's supply of food. The lonely winter was spent prospecting and thawing the gravel in preparation for the spring "clean-up." The sluicing of the spring of 1896 yielded a disappointing $620.

Henderson was devoted to the search for gold and the lack of success, like his leg injury earlier, could not diminish his fanatical pursuit. Looking farther afield, he worked his way to the source of Quartz Creek and crossed the divide into the watershed of the Klondike River. Prospecting a small creek he later named Gold Bottom Creek, he found "a two-cent prospect, that is two cents of gold to a pan," but his supplies were once again low.[10] Since this meager prospect was better than his previous finds in the area, he was determined to return to work it. The creek, he believed, flowed into the Klondike River and so he planned to return up that river. Although he went out to Ogilvie via the Indian River, he was confident he could find the mouth of Gold Bottom Creek where it flowed into the Klondike River.

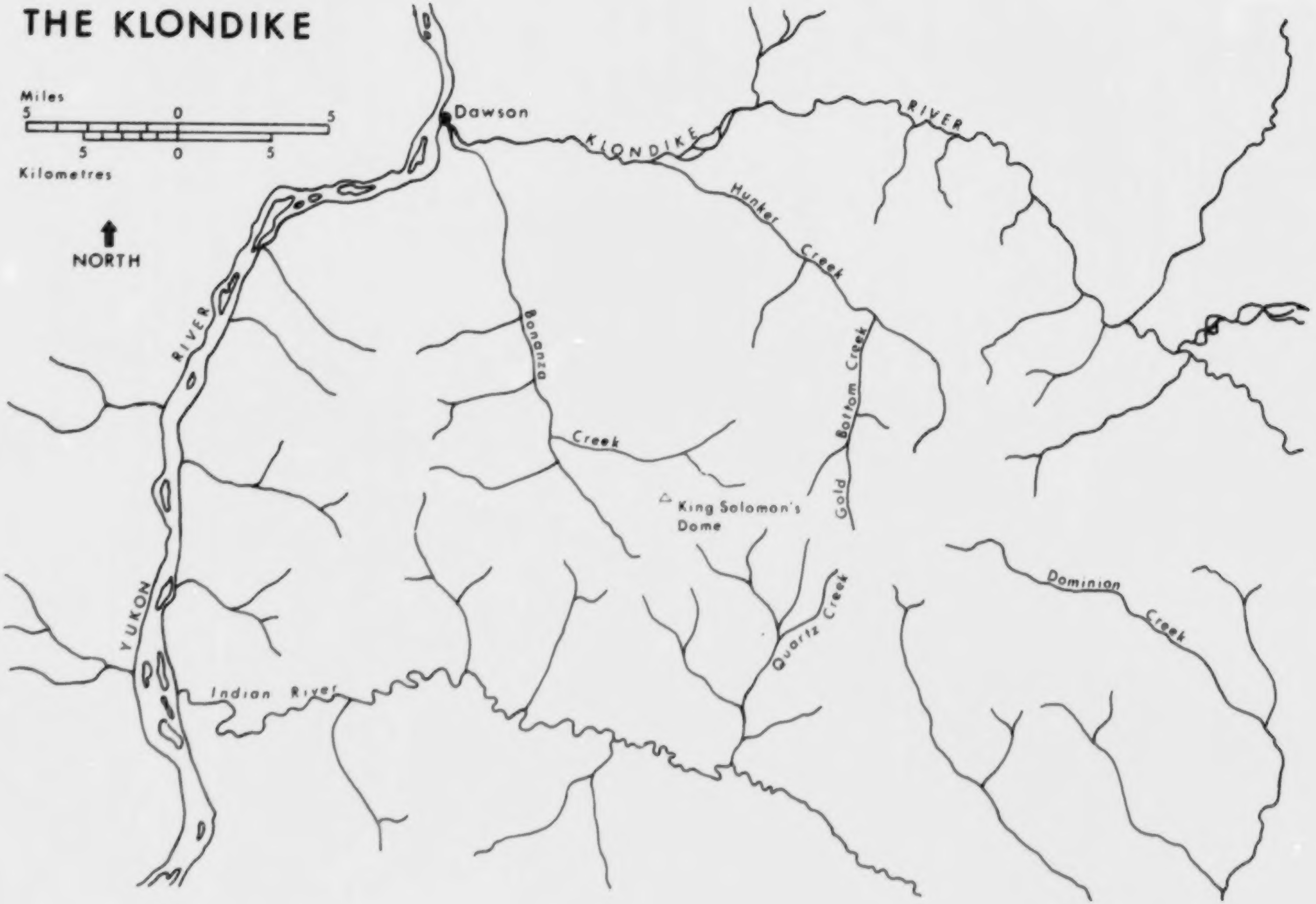
In July 1896 Henderson met George Washington Carmack and his two Indian companions, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie, camped at the mouth of the Klondike. Carmack was busy catching and drying fish. In accordance with "the unwritten miners code," Henderson told Carmack of the discovery he had made on Gold Bottom Creek, inviting him to prospect the area which the only slightly interested Carmack agreed to do.

George Carmack was born the son of a California 49er. At 16 he had gone to sea and eventually jumped ship at Juneau, working his way north from there. In 1887 William Ogilvie hired him as a packer along with a group of Stick Indians. Carmack was not by choice a prospector, but rather longed to be an Indian and indeed considered himself one. He had married an Indian woman which branded him a "squaw man." His easy-going attitude allowed him to live a completely unstructured life which was in direct contrast to the single-minded pursuit of gold by Henderson. Their chance meeting and the irony of the roles they were to play was the basis of a steamy controversy long after the rush.

About 20 days after Henderson's departure, the indolent Carmack and his two associates, supplied with the required hardware and a supply of food, mostly dried fish, proceeded up Rabbit Creek (Bonanza Creek) with a casual plan to find Henderson. Just below where they would make their discovery, Jim and Charlie, panning for fun during a respite, found a "ten-cent pan," but having as their goal Henderson's Gold Bottom Creek, the trio marched on. They descended on Henderson sometime later, nearly out of provisions. Henderson's objection to Indians staking on the creek and his inhospitable and ungenerous attitude led the group to take their leave. Remembering the prospects on Bonanza Creek, they returned by way of their earlier route.

Near the site of their initial experiments, Jim killed a moose to sustain the exhausted and starving party. During the two days following, the group dined well on fresh moose meat and panned the adjacent gravels, gathering enough gold to convince them they had found a major placer deposit. On the morning of August 17, 1896, George Carmack staked the discovery claim while Jim and Charlie took claims above and below. Carmack and Charlie left for Forty Mile to record the claim and resupply, leaving Jim to guard the claim.

THE KLONDIKE


Miles
5
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Kilometres
NORTH
Dawson
KLONDIKE
RIVER
Hunker Creek
Bonanza Creek
Gold Bottom Creek
King Solomon's Dome
Quartz Creek
Dominion Creek
YUKON RIVER
Indian River

In the meantime other miners, having talked to the ever enthusiastic Joe Ladue, were hunting for Henderson's discovery. Claims were staked lower on Bonanza Creek. Other creeks were staked as well, notably Gold Bottom Creek where Andrew Hunter staked his discovery claim below where Henderson worked alone and unaware of the increased activity in the Klondike valley. Henderson, through a curious set of unfortunate circumstances, missed out on his long-sought chance. Working his claim feverishly, he could not afford the time to record his claim and Carmack never did inform him of the new find which Henderson later insisted was the agreement made during the chance meeting at the fish camp on the Klondike River. As the allowance of discovery claims was strictly limited by government mining regulations and as two such claims were already granted in the Klondike area, Henderson, after all his effort, was bitterly out of luck. While his exploration had sparked the good fortune of others he had only an "ordinary claim" in the spectacular discovery.[11]

Meanwhile, Carmack and Charlie arrived at Forty Mile to record their claims and to replenish their supplies. The inexperienced prospector was relatively new to the district and his statements about the discovery were not considered worthy of attention. His desire to live like an Indian and associate with the Sticks had prejudiced him in the mining community. As a result, it was not until he dumped the golden contents of a spent rifle cartridge on the counter of the Forty Mile saloon that the doubting souls were stirred to belief and then to action. At this instant, a critical period of Yukon history ended.

The Internal Rush

The rush began almost immediately with the flow of Carmack's gold nuggets onto the saloon counter in Fortymile. William Ogilvie observed the rush from the Fortymile River area:

> The town was almost deserted; men who had been in a chronic state of drunkenness for weeks were pitched into boats as ballast and taken up to stake themselves a claim, and claims were staked by men for their friends who were not in the country at the time. All this gave rise to such conflict and confusion, there being no one present to take charge of matters, the agent being unable to go up and attend to the thing, and myself not yet knowing what to do, that the miners held a meeting, and appointed one of themselves to measure off and stake the claims, and record the owners names in connection therewith,...[12]

In the first two weeks of the rush, about 200 claims had been staked on Bonanza Creek. By November, nearly 500 claims had been staked and were either recorded or in the process thereof. The Yukon miners were jubilant. "Old timers" compared the richness of the creeks to the richest creeks found in California in 1849. The mood was euphoric - "New creeks are being found daily and all prospecting well."[13]

William Ogilvie in his later reports informed the Department of Interior in Ottawa of the expected magnitude of the discovery. Carmack's Bonanza Creek was expected to provide 300-400 claims while two other creeks (Hunker and Gold Bottom Creeks) above it could yield as many as 800-1000 claims.[14] The claims on the Klondike system would require at least 2000 men to work them properly. The Indian River system, Henderson's initial prospecting area, was expected to yield well, while the Stewart and Pelly rivers had showed indications of gold and the most recent discoveries on the Klondike were steadily shifting activity up river from the Forty Mile area.

News from Bonanza arriving at Ogilvie's office indicated that $100 - $500 could be made per day on ground prospected to mid-September. Specific stories were spectacular. Three men had apparently worked out $75 in four hours while one solitary nugget found was valued at $12. The nature of the find was quickly being ascertained. There was coarse gold and a great deal of it. Yields would increase once sluice boxes could be brought into operation. As yet only the surface deposits were being worked.[15]

Ogilvie's December reports were even more encouraging as the ground was explored more systematically. By January, claims on a branch of Bonanza Creek, the Eldorado Creek, had panned out over $200 per pan; while this was not the rule, there were "many running from $10 to $50" per pan.[16] Notwithstanding the inevitable exaggeration of reports, the Klondike appeared without a doubt to be the richest discovery in the Yukon, but only the water released by the spring melt would determine the real nature of the new gold diggings. Varying opinions were expressed with claims exchanged or sold for amounts reflecting the faith of their owners. The winter months were rampant with speculation.

News Reaches the "Outside"

The warming temperatures of the Yukon spring released not only water from its frozen sojourn, but three tons of gold.[17] This gold, clutched in the hands of about 80 men aboard the steamers *Porteous B. Weare* and *Alice*, headed down the Yukon to the "outside." At St. Michael the "gold kings" boarded two ships bound for the west coast of the United States. The *Portland* was first to leave and as a result, most of the men and their gold boarded her, bound for Seattle. With a smaller amount of gold, the *Excelsior* weighed anchor a few days later for the port of San Francisco.

While these men and their gold were leaving the Yukon, others were driven to the Yukon by their lack of gold. The United States was in the grip of an economic depression brought on by a shortage of gold. Its production had not kept pace with the demand from the growing population. The price of gold soared, making the dimly rumoured gold in the Yukon valley a desperate alternative to unemployment and hunger. In April and May of 1897, ships headed for Alaska were crowded with the would-be prospectors. Little was known of the Yukon country and less about access to it, so it was inevitable that these forerunners of the great rush should choose the Chilkoot Pass which had been publicized by Frederick Schwatka and other explorers. In the spring of 1897 these men awaited the breakup of the ice to launch their frail boats for the trip to the abandoned diggings at Forty Mile and Circle City.

In mid-July the *Excelsior* docked at San Francisco and disgorged its motley passengers, some literally staggering under the weight of their new-found fortunes. This, finally, was material evidence of the previously unsubstantiated rumours that had drifted south out of the Yukon during the previous year. San Francisco's newspapers picked up the sensational news of the Klondike and accented their stories with the antics of the exuberant newly rich prospectors.

The enterprising editor of the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*, reading the San Francisco papers, understood that the steamer *Portland* was about to arrive in Seattle. A tugboat was loaded with reporters and dispatched up the Puget Sound to waylay the "treasure ship." The *Portland* was boarded and the fantastic stories, garnered from those aboard, rushed to the printing presses. As the ship docked the headlines screamed "GOLD! GOLD! GOLD! GOLD! 68 rich men of the Steamer Portland; STACKS OF YELLOW METAL!" Beriah Brown, a reporter for the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*, added that "At 3 o'clock this morning the steamer Portland from St. Michael for Seattle, passed up the Sound with more than a ton of solid gold aboard."[18] The weight of the gold was electrifying and the phrase "a ton of gold" was shot across North America and around the world by the newspapers, fueling the imaginations of thousands of readers.

North American newspapers and magazines were alive with stories of the Klondike. Returning prospectors were hounded by reporters, by men heading north who wanted first-hand information, and by excited mobs of well-wishers. Gold fever was the order of the day and for the west coast at least, the depression was over.

Within hours of the breaking of the news, the word "Klondike" was on the lips of thousands. In the early stages of the stampede jobs and duties were cast aside; mass resignations characterized the service industries. Seattle's transportation system was thrown into a state of confusion as the street-car operators quit. Policemen left their jobs - Seattle lost 12 of its finest to the Klondike. Seattle's Mayor Wood, then in San Francisco, tendered his resignation and went to the Klondike without returning home. Salesmen, clerks, doctors and barbers left their clients before their imaginations could be sobered. These incidents were repeated by the thousands in the communities across the country and especially in those of the west coast of Canada and the United States, but the hyperbole reached its zenith when one reporter wrote, "Seattle has gone stark staring mad on gold."[19]

By the end of July 1897, barely ten days after the arrival of the *Portland*, 1500 people had left Seattle for the gold fields. Nine ships in the harbour prepared to leave, crowded with hopeful men. More men from all over the country poured into Seattle, filling its hotels and crowding its restaurants and streets. Outfitting stores multiplied overnight and did a fabulous business in supplying the miners with heavy woolen clothing, high rugged boots and mining equipment. Crowds of men in new brightly coloured mackinaws wandered through the streets, which were piled high with flour, dried beans, bacon and cases of evaporated food which they were expected to buy. The outfitters hired "steerers" to lure the unsuspecting, often totally ignorant men into their stores where the fool was soon parted from his money and saddled with a mountain of supplies that he would eventually leave on the trail to Dawson City.[20]

The stream of humanity continued to pour through Seattle and other west coast cities like San Francisco, Tacoma, Victoria and Vancouver, as each competed for the miner's dollar. In each of these cities, the would-be miners requiring information talked anxiously of the gold fields with each other and everyone they met. There was an abundance of advice to be sold or freely given. Newspapers featured stories by returning miners in which they advised on the best routes and outfits required. Some, like Joe Ladue, warned of the rigours of the Yukon prospector's life: the extreme cold, the lonely back-breaking work thawing and grubbing out the permanently frozen gravel, and the insufficient, monotonous diet that had to sustain the body through the physical hardships. Ladue advised waiting for the spring of 1898 before setting out, as river passage could not be had until May and the winter trip over the Chilkoot Pass was murderous.[21] His advice went unheeded by the senseless rushers already on their way into the freezing north.

In addition to the newspaper and magazine articles, groups of these artices and any other information about the Yukon and Alaska were lumped into books to be published and sold as guides for the new miners. Typical of such "guides" were *The Official guide to the Klondyke Country and the Gold Fields of Alaska*[22] published by the Conkey Company of Chicago and *Klondike, the Chicago Record's Book for Goldseekers*[23] published by the *Chicago Record*. Both books appeared in 1897 in a multitude of editions, printed by publishers across the United States who were trying to capitalize on the urgent demand for information. The Conkey book was a collection of undocumented newspaper clippings and interviews taken completely out of context. Typical of the entries was one of the hundreds that littered the "official" guide:

> Henry Tamprecht writes from the Klondike to say that there are miles of rich pay dirt all through the region. Men have taken a tub of water into their cabin and with a pan 'panned out' $2,000 in less than a day. This is said to equal to about $40,000 a day in the summer with sluice boxes. They get from $10 to $100 a pan average and a choice or picked pan as high as $250, and it takes about thirty minutes to wash a pan of dirt.[24]

The implicaton was obvious - everyone taking up the challenge of the Klondike was assured of success. Information about outfitting was usually included in the form of a lengthy list of foodstuffs, clothing and equipment required for the year it would take to make the reader a rich man. In addition, the guides generally outlined very briefly the various routes into the Yukon valley. Invariably, the emphasis and recommendation was on the Chilkoot Pass and White Pass routes for speed and the St. Michael route for ease of travel. Coverage of the numerous other routes emphasised a general lack of knowledge of them. While these guides provided the stampeder with some information about the nature of his proposed trek, for the most part they were rushed into print as quickly as possible, offering little to the thousands who needed accurate information so desperately.

Routes to the Gold Fields

Introduction

The routes that led to the gold fields can be grouped according to their geographic location and the type of trek involved, whether over land or over water. The only all-water route went through St. Michael, Alaska, and on up the Yukon River to Dawson City. A number of possible access routes began on the south coast of Alaska from Yakutat Bay, Prince William Sound or Cook Inlet. The most famous routes led from the head of Lynn Canal. The overland Ashcroft trail in British Columbia was alone in its solitude. The most reviled series of trails, known variously as the "back door route," the "overland route" or the "all-Canadian route," left Edmonton, winding their way through the north to Dawson City. There was no single path to the Yukon - the goldseekers advanced on the gold fields over dozens of trails through western Canada and Alaska.

St. Michael Route

Passage via St. Michael, Alaska, was termed the "rich man's route." The "route of course involves no personal hardship, other than what may be due to ten or twelve days' sail on the ocean."[25] Boarding an ocean steamer or a coastal freighter at Vancouver, Victoria or Seattle, the passenger could look forward to or dread the 2700-mile cruise. The hardship experienced was due largely to the stormy weather and the nature of the vessel on which passage was obtained. As the rush progressed, the discomfort of the ocean portion of the trip increased as the demand for transportation pressed craft of dubious backgrounds and seaworthiness into service. Prices, expensive in 1895, increased with the growing demand. Once at St. Michael, the miner transferred to one of the three or four river steamers operating on the river in 1896. The number of steamers increased as the volume of freight and passengers increased on the 1600-mile journey to Dawson.

Theoretically the passenger should have had little to worry about once his fare was paid, but such was not the case. Low water, mudflats, sandbars, and innumerable stops for wood which the fare-paying passengers were expected to haul aboard the boat, lengthened the trip beyond the advertised 15-20 days duration. The trip often took more than a month and if the late season trips were delayed at all, there was a long, cold winter on the Yukon River to endure. "Freeze-up" generally occurred, dependent on the position on the river, in the latter part of October.

Of 1800 Dawson-bound men who took the all-water route in the fall of 1897, only 43 reached Dawson.[26] Leaving the United States after the first of August would ensure failure. The winter of 1897-98 saw 2700 people stranded on the banks of the frozen Yukon, their goal many miles and many months off. For several, the trip was accomplished with a great deal less effort than any of the overland routes; however, for hundreds of others, the trip was fraught with frustration and delay, not to mention frostbite and starvation.

South Alaska Routes

The much heralded all-American routes leading directly to the golden heartland of Alaska from the shores of the gulf of Alaska were supposed to circumvent the financial burden of dealing with the Canadian customs officials. Rumours of old Indian and Russian trails running inland from the three large bays that indented the Alaskan coast spread through the crowds gathering in Seattle. During the winter of 1897-98, ships were dumping their hopeful charges on the beaches of all three bays. Their chances on one of these trails were as good as the next and all were terrible.

The trail that led inland from the head of Cook Inlet to the Tanana River via the Matanuka Valley consisted of over 200 punishing desolate miles of trail. Lieutenant J.C. Castner of the United States Army led a military expedition into Alaska from Cook Inlet to establish a trail to the Tanana River. The men arrived at the river starved, their feet torn, bloody and clothed in rags. Their horrible condition evidenced untold hardship. The suffering could not be explained to those who had not experienced it.

The route leading inland from Prince William Sound over the glittering Valdez Glacier was as breathtakingly beautiful as it was treacherous. In 1897, 3500 men and women attempted to cross the Valdez Glacier.[27] These people gathered on the beach near the present site of Valdez, Alaska, with their mountains of supplies.

The trail led out over the narrow beach and up a 20-mile ascent to the glacial summit towering over 5000 feet above the insect-like invaders. A descent of nine miles brought the snow-blind, exhausted travellers to the Kluteena River whose rapids waited to destroy what little spirit remained. The trail, had there been any to follow it, led up through the Copper River valley through the Alaska Range to the Tanana River.

The crossing of the Valdez Glacier would have been comically futile had it not been so horrible. Blinded by the dazzling snow by day, frozen camped on ice by night, attacked by avalanches and blizzards at any time, the parties were one by one defeated by the ice. The glacier was impassable. Facing complete failure, the majority of the groups who had landed in 1897 turned back during the summer of 1898 rather than endure another terrible winter, bitter in the realization that the fortune in Klondike gold was beyond their grasp.[28]

Those that struck out for the gold-laden gravel of the Alaskan rivers from Yakutat Bay had to contend with the giant Malaspina Glacier which lay between them and the Tanana River. The 1500 square miles of this, the largest piedmont glacier, gathered its immensity from six small glaciers which fed it with ice and snow from the heights of the St. Elias Mountains.

The number of men who hoped to cross is not known, but several parties left records of the defeat they faced. The Arthur Dietz party consisted of 18 men who had joined to form a mining company to exploit properly the riches of Alaska. In April 1898 they were dumped with supplies and equipment at the foot of the giant glacier. One year later, in the spring of 1899, seven of the party were found by the United States revenue cutter *Walcott* on the same beach. Three were dead in their sleeping bags. Four were alive, but of these, two were blind and two had their sight impaired for life by the repeated snowblindness. The avalanches, the inescapable cold and insanity had killed all the others.[29]

The attempt to establish an all-American route was a failure. The three proposed trails had as their common goal the Tanana River. The river flowed westward, joining the Yukon River about 750 miles from the coast. Arriving at the confluence, the travellers who had aleady trekked hundreds of miles across the Alaskan wilderness had then to fight the Yukon's current more than 800 miles to Dawson City. A hindsight comparison of these all-American trails makes them ludicrous and perhaps one of the worst examples of the irresponsible mercenary motives of the transportation companies serving the gold-rush traffic on the Pacific coast.

The Edmonton Trail

In patriotic nationalistic opposition to the all-American routes, the commercial and political interests in Canada promoted an all-Canadian route. One of these was the so-called "Edmonton Trail." Touted as the "'inside track' to their own gold fields," Canadians and any others who would listen were urged north from Edmonton. The trail linked a series of Hudson's Bay Company posts from Edmonton to Athabasca Landing, to Fort Smith, to Fort Simpson, to Fort Good Hope and to Fort McPherson, 1882 miles from Edmonton. Once at the mouth of the Mackenzie River, the miners were to make use of John Bell's route via the Peel, Rat and Porcupine rivers to attain the Yukon River which was then ascended to the gold fields.

Miners were assured of only half the difficulty experienced on the Alaskan routes:

> The great advantage of the inland route is that it is an organized line of communication. Travellers need not carry any more food than will take them from one Hudson Bay post to the next, and then there is abundance of fish and wild fowl en route. They can also be in touch with such civilization as prevails up there, can always get assistance at posts, and will have some place to stay should they fall sick or meet with an accident...Parties travelling alone will not need to employ guides until they get near Fort Macpherson, and from there on to the Klondyke, as the rest of the route from Edmonton is so well defined, having been travelled for years, that no guides are required.[30]

The route was supposed to put Canadians in the gold-fields six to eight weeks after leaving Edmonton, a promise bordering on fantasy. To make the nearly 2700 mile journey in the suggested time, the miners would have had to travel 50-65 miles, through the roadless wilderness, each day. Tappan Adney described the trail with less enthusiasm:

> The insane desire of Canada to find an all-Canadian route to her new possessions has led to the suggestion as possible routes those used by the Hudson's Bay Company to reach the Yukon. From Edmonton a wagon-road of 96 miles to Athabasca Landing; thence by small boat, 430 miles,

> to Lake Athabasca; thence down Slave River, across Great Slave Lake, and down the Mackenzie River, 1376 miles, to the neighbourhood of Fort McPherson, near the mouth of the Mackenzie; thence up Rat River and over an all water connection at McDougall's Pass into the Porcupine; and thence down the Porcupine to the Yukon, 496 miles - a total distance from Edmonton of 2398 miles (Mr. William Ogilvie's figures). There the would-be Klondiker, 303 miles below Dawson and against a hard current, is practically farther away from his destination then if at Dyea or Skagway.[31]

It took those who persevered months and even years to reach the Klondike.

Other routes fanned out to the northwest overland to the Peace and Liard Rivers on to the Pelly and into the Yukon system. Following in part Robert Campbell's route of discovery, Inspector J.D. Moodie of the North West Mounted Police was ordered north to discover what he could of the route lying to the north of Edmonton. Moodie began his trip in September of 1897, following the overland route to the Peace River which he ascended, crossing the divide into the Dease River and down into the Liard River. Moodie ascended the Liard and crossed the second major divide into the Pelly River, arriving in Fort Selkirk on snowshoes in the early winter of 1898.[32] The gold rush was over and to add insult to injury, the information he had gathered so painstakingly had been made redundant by time. The gold rush had reached its climax during the 14 months Moodie was on the trail.

Moodie's experience was characteristic of many who left Edmonton with false confidence instilled by the greedy Edmonton merchants and boosters. The route was long and circuitous. Despite the lavish promises to the contrary, the stampeder was left to his own often incapable devices. If he managed to survive the trek, he arrived in the gold fields too late to gain a share of the wealth.

Ashcroft and Stikine Trails

Like the Edmonton trail, the Ashcroft trail was an all-Canadian route running north the length of British Columbia. The trail began in Ashcroft on the Thompson River, running overland straight north through the Fraser River valley into the old Caribou gold-mining district. Curving to the northwest, it joined the old Western Union telegraph trail of 1865. The trail crossed the Skeena River at the mouth of which other men joined the trek less than halfway to its goal. The trail continued north, crossing the Stikine River where men joining it from the coast via that river called it the Stikine trail. The Stikine trail crossed 150 miles of swamp and marsh to Teslin Lake and the Yukon River drainage system.

The overland trail was "a sea of mud," a "thousand mile rut" in which horses, mules and cattle mired.[33] The broken hopes of hundreds lay in the heaps of costly supplies along the entire length of the trail. Norman Lee attempted to drive a herd of cattle to Dawson, hoping to make his fortune in beef steak rather than in frozen gravel. The mud, lack of feed, poisonous weeds and a Teslin Lake storm completely ruined him. He had set out with 200 cattle and by the time he reached Teslin Lake, there was little meat left on the boney carcasses he loaded onto the scows at the lake's edge. The scows were wrecked and his investment lost - he was penniless. There was no alternative but to turn back in complete defeat.[34]

Others used the trail and made it to Dawson. In 1897-98 the trail was crowded with people. Those without draft animals pulled sleighs and often pushed an odd-looking two-wheeled cart loaded with their means to fortune. The Yukon Field Force, in their bright scarlet jackets, marched to Dawson along the Stikine trail. The 200 men had been sent north to forestall any threat to Canadian sovereignty in the Yukon.

The trail, unlike the southern Alaskan alternatives or the Edmonton trail, was not futile. For those who joined the Stikine trail via the Skeena or Stikine Rivers, the route was no more forebidding than the famous Chilkoot or White Pass trails. Besides these latter trails, the ancient Chilkat trail wound a circuitous route to the Yukon River from the head of Lynn Canal, but like the other alternatives, its major drawback was its length. While it was used heavily by traders like its chief promoter, Jack Dalton, before the construction of the White Pass and Yukon Route, it was never attractive to the stampeders. The Chilkoot and White Pass trails, although difficult and at times impassable, attracted the vast majority of the Klondike-bound men. These mountain passes offered the shortest, fastest way to the gold fields and the urgency of the movement outweighed the hardship of the steep climb.

THE GOLD RUSH TRAIL, 1896-97

The Trails

The name Chilkoot Pass did not always elicit understanding, but the single picture of the long, thin line of men bent under their heavy packs, straining upward on the steep, snow-covered slope was immediately recognized. The long, thin line stretched upward, disappearing into a barely discernible notch in the distant ridge. The stark contrast of the struggling humanity on the glittering white snow symbolizes at once the elation of hope and the unbearable futility of the Rush of '98. The other trails were long and difficult and the printed descriptions were deceptive, but the wall of ice and snow, built into a barely surmountable legend by the writers of the day, was proven the shortest, most effective way into the gold fields.

The trail through the Chilkoot was too steep for draft animals, but heavily burdened men could, with effort, cross the divide. Heavy snowfall, howling blizzards and avalanches in the winter, and rain, fog, bogs and rocks in the summer characterized the trek over the Chilkoot. To the hardships imposed by nature, the influx of hopeful men added the frustration of crowding; during the height of the rush there was little place to pitch a tent on the congested trail.

The Chilkoot Pass

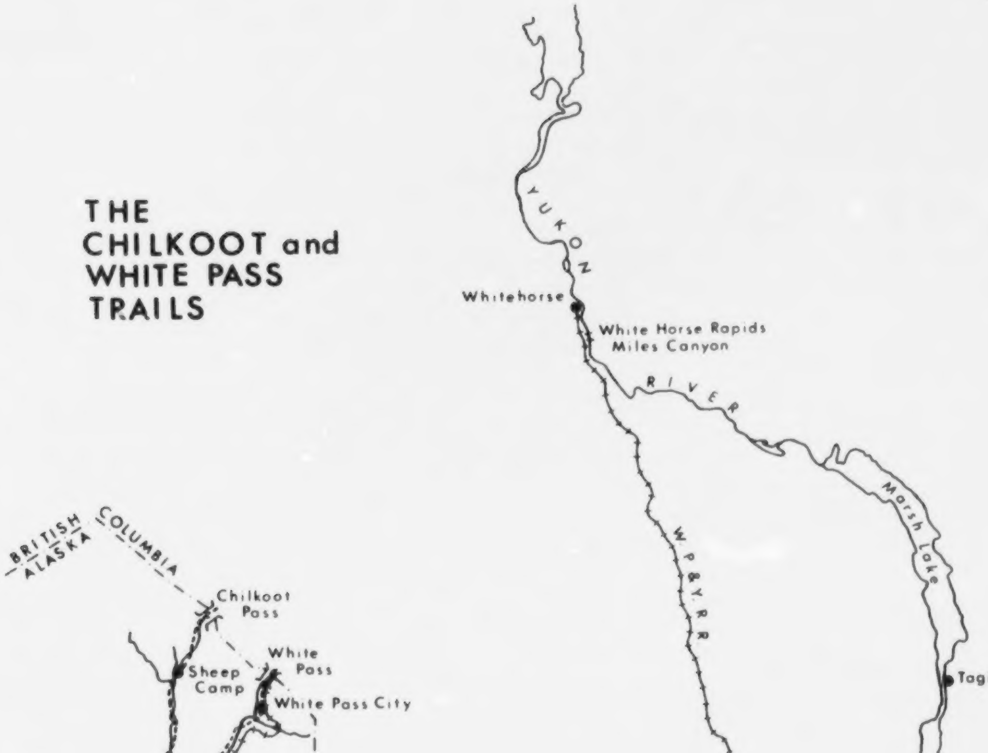
The miner began his trek on the muddy beach in front of the boom town of Dyea. Nonexistent before the rush, save for the Healy and Wilson trading post, the town grew into a long, narrow settlement of hotels and saloons lining a main street which was the beginning of the Chilkoot trail. From the head of Taiya Inlet, the trail was deceptively easy for the first eight miles to the foot of the canyon. The trail crossed the terminal moraine of an ancient glacier "which was nothing worse than the avoidance of a few rocks left in the moraine."[1] The trail followed a wagon road for the first five miles to Finnigan's Point where a huddle of tents surrounded a restaurant, a saloon and a blacksmith shop.[2] For the next three miles the trail headed straight for the mouth of the canyon of the Taiya River. The trail was boggy in places and in the fall of 1897, Pat Finnigan and his sons had corduroyed the trail from Finnigan's Point to the head of canoe navigation on the Taiya River where they made an unsuccessful attempt to collect a toll from the crowding miners.[3]

Paralleling the river, the trail was level crossing the river on a log toll bridge just before it entered the canyon.[4] Once into the canyon, which was two miles long and several hundred feet wide, the trail steepened. The rise to the foot of the canyon had only been 300 feet above sea level but the trail through the Canyon climbed the hillside above the river. "This is the worst part of the trail, for it is all heavily wooded and the surface is rough and covered with decayed vegetable matter which in spots is worked into deep mud by animals passing over it."[5] Some of the worst places had been corduroyed to aid passage. Above the canyon the trail crossed the river via a bridge to the west side ten and a half miles from and 700 feet above the coast.[6] The settlement of Pleasant Camp developed above the canyon. It was a natural place to stop after the gloomy climb through the canyon. The ground was relatively level, covered with cottonwoods and spruce trees. The resting miners were afforded an abundance of good water and firewood.[7] The trail continued up the west side of the river for about one and a half miles to Sheep Camp which was 1000 feet above sea level.[8] Sheep Camp, which consisted of two restaurants and a gambling saloon in September of 1897, was where most of the would-be miners spent their first exhausted night on the trail. Beyond Sheep Camp, wood was no longer available and to camp further along the trail in the early stages of the rush meant no cooking and no heat.

The trail leading out of Sheep Camp crossed to the east side of the river and climbed nearly 600 feet in the next mile to a gigantic boulder which was named Stone House, a noteworthy landmark on the early trail. Stone House had received its name because it appeared to afford some shelter in its shadows from the fierce storms frequently encountered in the valley. The distance between Sheep Camp and Stone House was "over a rough surface covered with immense rocks which by some convulsion of nature have been detached from the mountain side and rolled down the bank of the creek."[9] Beyond the landmark, as even the stunted scrub brush disappeared, the muck associated with the trail through the area was left behind, making footing more sure on the bare rocks.[10] The trail rose 900 feet to the base of the final ascent, a level rubble-covered area named the Scales, because the professional packers reweighed their packs a final time and adjusted the payment required before completing the trip. A great portion of the climb was up "Long Hill," a gradual but steady tedious ascent to the Scales. At the plateau, almost without exception, miners cached their goods until they could relay all of their stock of provisions to the foot of the Pass.

The ascent to the summit from the Scales at 3000 feet above sea level was without question the steepest and most difficult part of the trail. The horizontal distance was about half a mile and the vertical distance was about 500-600 feet. The surface of the trail was covered with gigantic chunks of broken angular rock. In the short summer season the climbers literally crawled from rock to rock to the cleft. In the winter the surface was made more regular by the heavy snowfall, but then the slippery surface had to be climbed via steps cut in the packed snow and ice along which a rope was placed to support and guide the burdened packer. Mechanization on this portion of the trail was begun already as the press of men increased. A "wire rope tramway" was under construction in the fall of 1897, to ease the task for those who could afford it.[11]

The gorge through the divide, the pass itself, was often filled with snow even in the summer as was the steep descent to Crater Lake immediately below the summit. The distance from the summit to Lake Lindeman was about nine miles, descending 1300 feet. The snow-covered trail to Crater Lake dropped several hundred feet to the water, but the



THE CHILKOOT and WHITE PASS TRAILS

YUKON
Whitehorse
White Horse Rapids
Miles Canyon
RIVER
Marsh Lake
W.P.&Y.R.R.
Tagish Post
BRITISH COLUMBIA
ALASKA
Chilkoot Pass
White Pass
Sheep Camp
White Pass City
Dyea
Skagway
Carcross
Bennett
Tagish Lake
Taku Arm
West Arm
Lake
Windy Arm
NORTHWEST TERR
BRITISH COLUMBIA
Tutshi Lake
Chilkoot Inlet
Chilkat Inlet
Bennett
Lindeman
Lake
Lindeman
Chilkoot Trail
ALASKA
White Pass Trail
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0
10
Miles
LYNN CANAL

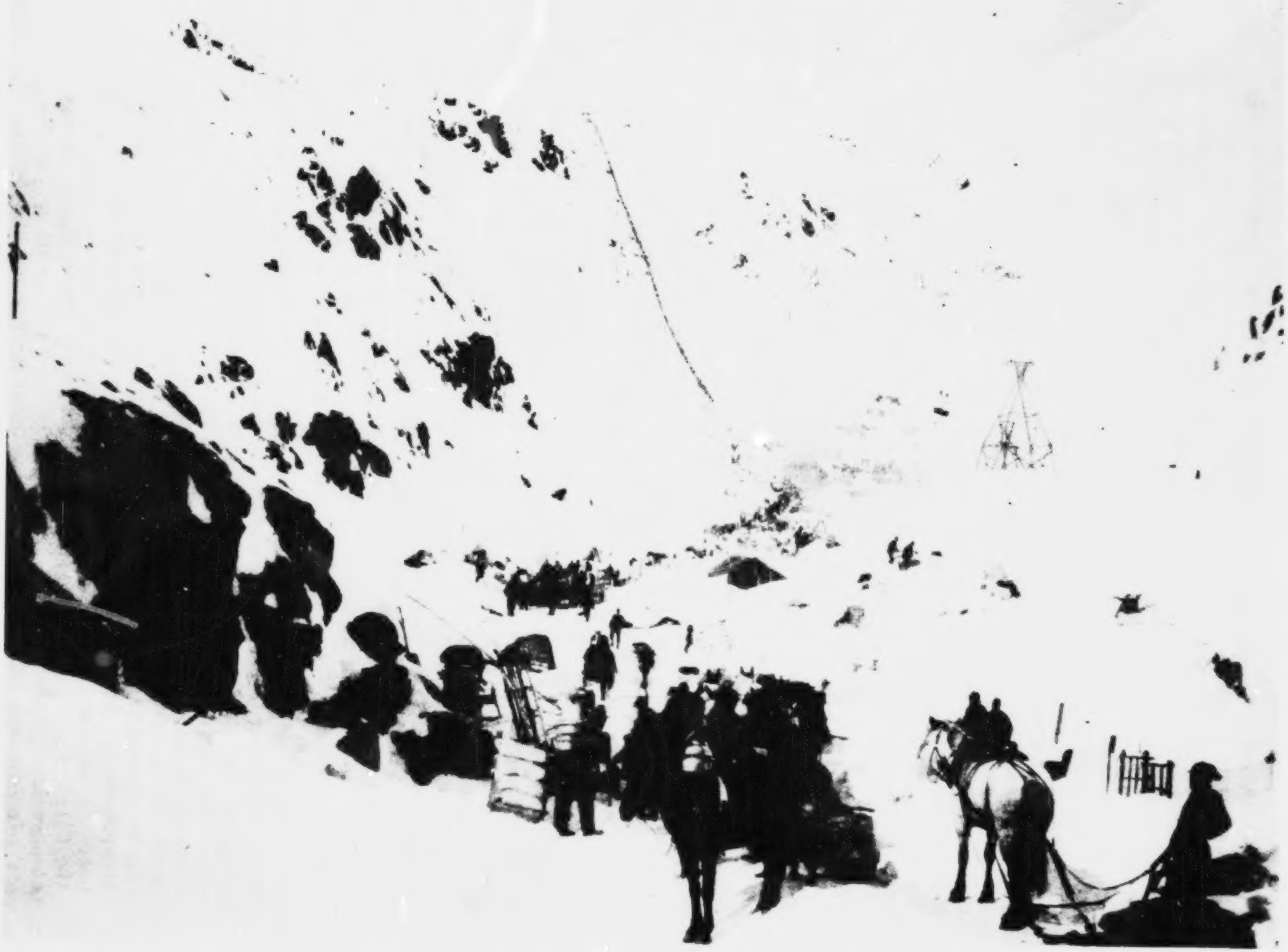

Figure 1. The Chilkoot Pass in the spring of 1898. (Public Archives Canada.)

existing Indian trail to Lake Lindeman followed the hillside, reaching the lake farther along its length.[12]

From the head of Crater Lake the miner could choose to use a system of ferries that had been hurriedly pressed into service. The first of these transported a miner and his goods to the foot of Crater Lake where the miner portaged them two and a half miles to the head of Long Lake. The procedure was repeated through Long lake and Deep Lake with the necessary intervening portages. In all, the ferry service eliminated three miles of the nine to Lake Lindeman, saving the packer many miles of actual relay packing.[13]

The foot traveller descended gradually to Crater Lake, avoiding the sharp descent leading directly to the lake. The foot trail followed the portage between Crater and Long lakes through a "small box canyon, where the walking, except on the snow, is hard, on account of boulders."[14] Happy Camp in the valley of Long Lake was named by the heavily burdened men for some unknown reason, as it was a desolate camp. What little wood had been available was quickly depleted and the camp offered little shelter from the elements. The trail crossed the creek to the west between Long and Deep lakes, following the shore of the latter. Once past the small lakes, the trail skirted the edge of a canyon where the river draining the Chilkoot Pass area plunged down into Lake Lindeman. Later Lindeman would swell with restaurants, hotels, saloons and other comforts.

For many of the weary packers this was the end of the trek over the Chilkoot. Timber, albeit of poor quality, existed for the construction of boats at the head of Lake Lindeman and many accepted readily what nature offered instead of pushing on to the head of Lake Bennett where a similar tent city was growing among timber of a more suitable size for boat building. It is impossible to estimate how many people built craft to carry them to Dawson or only as far as Bennett where they could rebuild and improve their craft. Lake Lindeman emptied into Lake Bennett through a mile long tangle of rocks and white water which, combined with the miner's carelessness and inexperience, often necessitated the building of new boats. At Lake Bennett the trail from the White Pass joined the trail from the Chilkoot Pass and a larger temporary tent city developed. At this point, goods were cached and the parties prepared for the descent of the Yukon River system to Dawson.

The White Pass

The White Pass did not have the advance publicity that attended the Chilkoot Pass. Frederick Schwatka was unaware of its existence when he entered the Yukon. In 1887 Captain William Moore, the bankrupt steamboat operator, had discovered the Pass while working for the surveyor William Ogilvie. Painfully aware of his economic situation, Moore envisioned a transportation empire based on the route he had discovered. It was almost a thousand feet lower than the Chilkoot and it appeared as if a railroad could be built through the pass to the heart of the Yukon Valley, a possibility supported by Ogilvie. Unlike the Chilkoot, the White Pass had an interested promoter long before the discoveries of 1896.[15]

In February 1895 Moore induced a handful of young California prospectors to use the White Pass to gain access to the headwaters of the Yukon River. In 1897 when the first shiploads of goldseekers arrived at Dyea, Moore was waiting to divert those he could to his newly founded port of Mooresville. As the first shipload poured ashore, the town consisted solely of Moore's log cabin and a long wharf stretching out into the shallow sea. The crowds of men and supplies, unaware and uncaring, ignored Moore's claim. Moore was helpless in the face of the surging, determined crowd. The town was renamed Skagway and a hastily organized civic government appointed a surveyor to plait the town. Moore continued to protest in vain and was forced to move as his log cabin, built years before, was found to block one of the new streets. Moore's only recourse was litigation which, after the rush, gained him a modicum of financial satisfaction.[16]

The White Pass trail, to which the miners advanced, was a completely different experience from that of the Chilkoot. Unlike the Chilkoot trail which led almost directly to the base of the summit and over the ridge, the White Pass trail wound its way up the Skagway River valley over and around an endless series of hills and truncated spurs to the summit. Ogilvie, the Canadian surveyor, was familiar with the trail and pointed out its many problems:

> For about four miles the route goes over an alluvial flat covered with fair timber, and from this point to the summit, about 11 miles, it follows along the hillside bordering the valley, ascending and descending over rough, broken, rocky surface, crossing and recrossing the little river several times, until at the summit, although we are only 2,600 feet above the sea...we aggregate possibly 5,000 feet actual climbing.[17]

The trail began deceptively across a flat alluvial plain of the Skagway River for three and a half miles with a rise of only 140 feet. A wagon road existed in 1897 to the first crossing of the river about one and a half miles from the sea. Initially, wagons could go no further as only a horse bridge had been built by Moore. From the flat to the picturesque Black Lake, the trail rose steadily, about 400 feet in a little over a mile. From Black Lake it was three and a half miles to the top of Porcupine Hill which towered 1000 feet above the lake. After the men and horses had crossed Porcupine Creek the ascent of the hill began. The trail picked its way between gigantic boulders and intervening mudholes for two and a half miles. The mud mired the heavily burdened men and animals, mud in which "a man without a pack will sink to his knees almost every other step." It often took men four agonizing hours to reach the crest of the hill.[18] The height attained, the trail dropped sharply to the floor of the valley 500 feet below where the Skagway River was crossed for the fourth time.[19] The trail forked, one branch to the west (left) continuing along the river. The "river cut-off" saved a mile, but was unsuitable for pack animals.[20] The main horse trail veered east (right) from the river, ascending a 300-foot hill before dropping to cross the river and climbing back up onto the hillside 1000 feet in one and one-third miles, continuing at the higher level to the foot of the summit slope.[21] It was 900 feet to the summit but the trail continued as before, up and down many gulches and knolls and very irregular ground.

From the summit to Lake Bennett, the distance was 24 miles through rocky, hummocky, glaciated land cut by gulches and ravines, making the trails a series of ups and downs for a much higher total distance. In the winter the heavy snowfall took some of the irregularity out of the

Figure 2. Sleds approaching the White Pass summit, 1898. (Glenbow-Alberta Institute.)

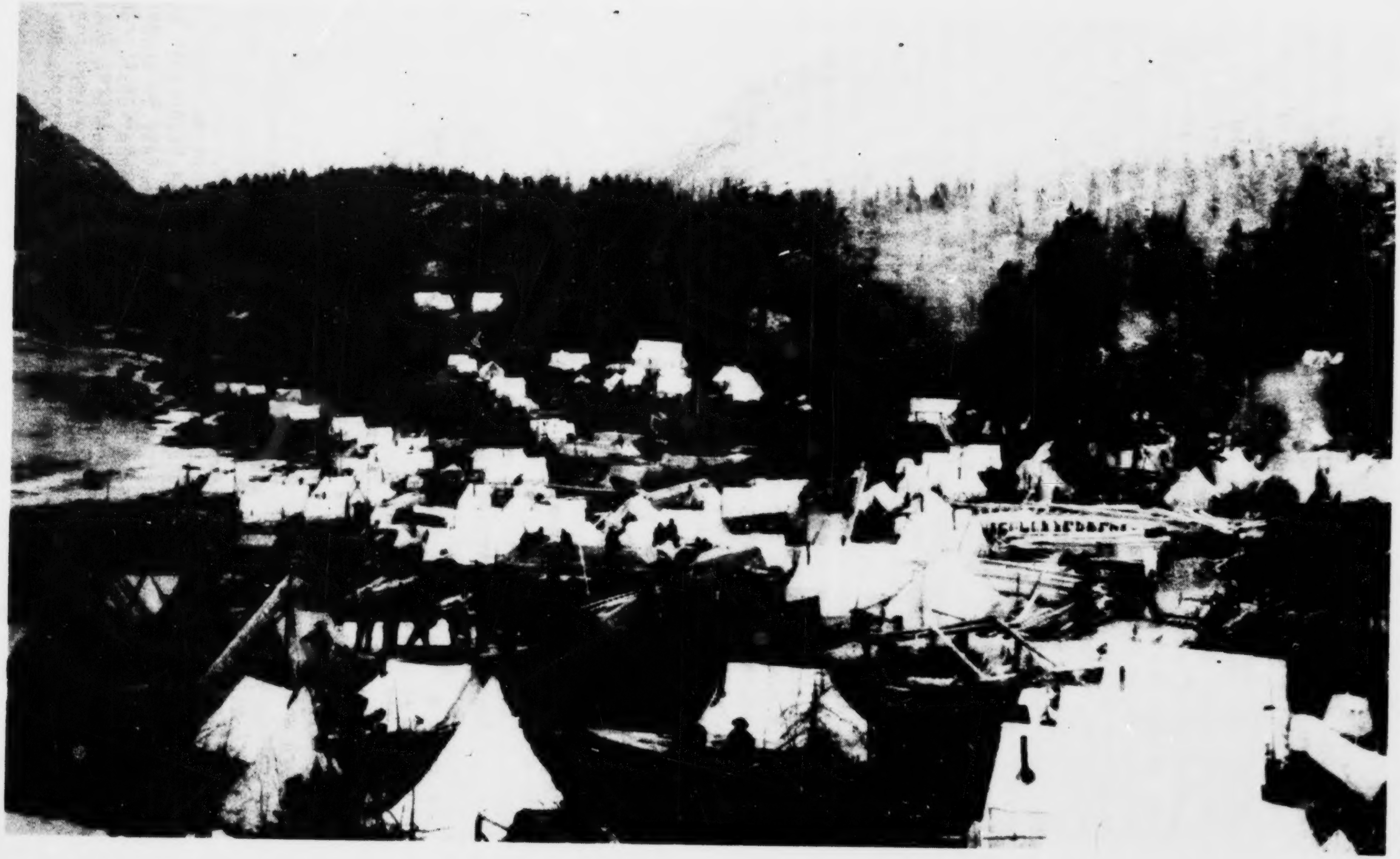

Figure 3. Goldseekers building boats in Abbot Cove, Lake Bennett. (Public Archives Canada.)

trek, but added additional problems. The trail followed a shallow broad valley, which was occupied by a chain of small slender lakes drained by the Tutishi River into Tutishi Lake and subsequently into Taku Arm of Tagish Lake. As with the Chilkoot trail beyond the summit, a group of enterprising men had put boats or ferries on Summit, Bernard and Shallow lakes to reap what monetary benefits they could from the miners wishing to save a few weary miles of back-breaking packing. The "settlement" of Log Cabin marked the fork in the trail and one of the choices held a warning in the form of a board sign nailed to a tree. The men were warned away from the Tutishi River because it flowed through seven miles of rapid-infested canyon before it reached Tutishi Lake which was joined to Taku Arm by a one mile portage, an alternative attractive to some. The main body of men, however, took the west fork which headed across muskeg and swamp to near the foot of Lake Lindeman, turning north to join the Chilkoot trail and the crowds of men at Bennett Lake.

The time factor was all-important to the miner, whether he was on the Chilkoot or the White Pass. As the crowds increased through the fall of 1897, the trail deteriorated as the thin soil and leaf mould which covered both trails below the tree line was ground into the thick mud by the thousands of feet. The freezing temperatures and snow of the winter of 1897-98 brought some relief but in turn created a new set of problems. Few men made Lake Bennett in time to build their boats before the ice closed the lakes and rivers. The last leg of the journey would have to be completed in the spring as men continued to haul their supplies to the wooded shores of Lake Bennett all winter. A large flotilla began to take shape on the shores of Lakes Lindeman and Bennett for the assault of the Yukon River that spring of 1897.

The Lakes and River

The miners who waited through the winter of 1897-98 contemplated the forthcoming descent of the Yukon. Compared to the ordeal they had just survived, whether it was the Chilkoot or the White Pass, the river appeared to them a welcome if not leisurely conclusion to the arduous trek to Dawson. Transient tent towns had been laid out at the head of Lindeman and Bennett lakes. The only industry was the building of boats and scows with everyone engaged in this activity throughout the first winter of the rush.

For those at Lindeman, the route they waited to clear of ice started by crossing the length of the narrow blue-green lake to One Mile River which flowed into Lake Bennett. The river was shallow, narrow and choked with rocks. Almost invariably the crude boats were "lined" through and goods were portaged around. Those foolish enough to "run" the rapids usually paid dearly for the decision in lost supplies and the destruction of their boats. Once on Lake Bennett, the traffic increased as the flotilla was joined by those from Bennett City.

Lake Bennett was, like Lindeman, narrow and flanked by high mountain ridges. Wind and sudden storms were the main hazards to the water-borne miners. For many the trip was uneventful save those delays caused by storms and repairs to their leaky craft. Lake Bennett emptied into the small Nares Lake and subsequently into the much larger Tagish Lake where the frequent storms and wind presented more problems for the unwieldy, cumbersome craft. Tagish Lake flowed into the broad, shallow

Marsh Lake through Tagish River, a six-mile narrowing of the waterway. Here the North West Mounted Police had set up their monitoring post where they registered the passing boats and collected Canadian customs duties on outfits purchased in the American ports. Through Marsh Lake it was only 20 miles to the Lewes or Yukon River.[22]

Once out of the lakes, the miners began to watch for the dreaded Miles Canyon and the infamous "death dealing" White Horse Rapids. These lay about 30 miles beyond the end of Marsh Lake. To enter them by mistake meant possible loss of the boat and outfit and perhaps life itself. The approach was well marked by the spring of 1897 and by the spring of 1898, pilots, of dubious experience, were available for a fee to guide the hundreds of boats through the white water. A tramway service was also available for a fee to tranship goods around the obstacle. If the miner could pass the rapids safely, there was little save sandbars, snags and various deadfalls to hamper his passage to Dawson. Although fraught with dangers and hardships of its own, the waterway from the pass to Dawson was a great deal less discouraging than the monotonous repetitive tramp over the crowded mountain trails.

The Trek Through the Passes, 1896-97

The physical description of the trails reveals only a minute part of the story of the trek over the Chilkoot and White passes. As a result of the worldwide interest in the Klondike Gold Rush, articles in newspapers and magazines appeared immediately following the electrifying news of the gold discoveries. The press answered the demand of their depression weary readership for firsthand knowledge of the gold fields by dispatching special correspondents to the Yukon. The market was soon glutted with a variety of primary accounts of the trek to, and conditions in, the goldfields. The most heavily used routes through the Chilkoot and White passes already had a literary reputation and garnered more attention not only from the professional writers, but from some of the more literate participants in the rush itself. The drama of the rush unfolded through the printed personal accounts. It was through the words of the men and women who actually hauled their "ton" of supplies over the trails that the individual agonies and triumphs were welded into the Chilkoot experience.

The Chilkoot Pass, 1896

Arthur Walden, "Dog Puncher," April 1896. Arthur T. Walden and his partner initially arrived at Dyea in March 1896. His career in Alaska and the Yukon, of which so little was known at the time, would span many years as he carried mail by dog team from Skagway to Circle City. The desolate town of Dyea, huddled at the head of Lynn Canal, consisted of the Healy and Wilson trading post surrounded by about a dozen Indian "shacks." Walden made his first camp at Dyea in the company of about 100 other men who were forwarding their supplies up the trail by "back tripping" in short repeated relays.[23]

Walden and his party, like the others, relayed their goods to Sheep Camp and over the summit on their backs or in narrow sleds. In Walden's case, his sled was pulled by a single dog. The process took 23 days to move the 1200-pound outfit from the tidewater to the frozen shores of Lake Lindeman.

Indians were available to pack goods at the rate of 1¢ per pound, but not many of the crowd, consisting mostly of seasoned miners, were hiring the professional packers. The only people taking advantage of the service were traders or gamblers.[24] Most of those gathered on the trail in the spring of 1896 did their own packing, having formed associations and partnerships to more closely watch the provisions, which due to the relaying system were spread out in two or more places along the trail.

The trail from the summit to Lake Lindeman was nine miles long. When Walden passed, the lakes were still frozen and men were sledding their outfits down the ice-covered chain of small lakes. The way was all downhill over the ice of the canyoned rivers which drained the lakes. At Lake Lindeman a number of men had gathered to build their boats while others were spread out along the shores, taking advantage of any good stand of timber. It took days to build the boats of hand whipsawn timber. The round logs were hoisted onto a scaffolding and ripped into boards with a long saw operated by the partners, one below and one above. The operation was the ultimate test of many hastily arranged companies.

Walden and his partner continued crossing the ice-covered Lakes Lindeman and Bennett to the head of Tagish Lake, transporting their goods on sleds. Finding good timber and the company of several other camps of men, the partners stayed more than a month, during which time they built their boat and waited for the ice to go out before continuing through Tagish Lake.

At the foot of Tagish Lake in the area where the Canadian government was eventually to erect a customs post were the "Tagish Houses," which were Indian graves. The Indians cremated their dead and entombed the vessel, often a brassbound box, in the slatted houses raised off the ground on posts.[25]

The water-borne party was notified of expected danger ahead by some concerned individual who "had hung out a warning in the shape of a white rag" about a mile from the rapids. Many boats had already collected at the head of the Miles Canyon preparing to go through or around the obstacle. Usually the boats were unloaded before entering the white water. The outfits were portaged over the hills and around to the foot of the rapids allowing the empty boats to be "run through" the canyon more easily. There were no rollers in the fast water and the only danger in this three-part obstacle was the risk of coming into contact with the walls of the canyon. The combination of speed and jagged rock walls could tear the frail boats to pieces. Below the canyon the turbulence increased and the boats had to be guided down with ropes by men on shore while those in the craft poled them off the rocks which choked the water course.[26]

The rough water ended in the White Horse Rapids:

> ...where the river narrows to twenty or twenty-five feet, and is a mass of spray, but the shores are long ledges and boats could be pulled out and run along shore to

> smooth water. The other way was to rig your bateau or scow with fore-and-aft sweeps, lashed onto out riggers, then to cut loose from the shore a couple of hundred yards above the rapids - and you were through everything provided you were lucky.[27]

Walden reported that 18 men drowned in the spring of one year, encouraging the growth of the White Horse Rapids legend. Boats could be piloted through the rapids even at this early date, and Walden and his partner acted as pilots, earning from $10 to $50 per boat from those less stout of heart.[28]

Walden continued down the Yukon to Circle City in Alaska where the miners worked the Birch Creek diggings. Rather than look for gold, the "dog puncher" freighted supplies from Circle City to the gold fields. The men he met in the way-houses then and through the rush of 1896-98 came from all parts of the world. There were old prospectors from the rush of '49, some had mined in South America, Australia and South Africa and each was a fiercely individualistic personality joining the camaraderie of the hunt for gold and the harsh northern life. These men were a different breed from the thousands who would soon follow their newly explored trails.

Edward Spurr, Geologist, June 1896. Edward Spurr was attracted by the gold in the Yukon and Alaska, but not in the same way as were the others on the Chilkoot in the early spring of 1896. Spurr was a geological scientist sent to the Yukon Valley by the United States Geological Survey to investigate the mineral resources of the country in general. Leaving Washington, D.C., in May 1896, he arrived on the west coast where he booked space on a cruise ship headed up the Inside Passage. As a member of the "flannel shirt and unblacked boot" fraternity, he was the centre of attraction for the boat load of tourists. At Juneau his comfortable conveyance was abandoned for a crowded space on the deck of the freighter *Scrambler* bound for Dyea. The ship had not been built to accommodate passengers and there were 50 - 60 men crammed aboard her for the voyage through Lynn Canal.[29]

While in Juneau, Spurr had laid in supplies for the trip. Food in the amount of three poounds per man per day and the appropriate cooking utensils were purchased by a seasoned prospector Spurr had hired as a guide. The party planned to build a boat at the head of Lake Lindeman. To this end, a whipsaw, draw shave, chisels, hammers, nails, screws, oakum, pitch and lumber were purchased. Also added were an A-shaped tent, great quantities of special mosquito netting and such items of personal attire as were deemed necessary to protect the members of the party against the wet, the cold and the ubiquitous mosquito. The outfit was to be packed in canvas bags with shoulder straps and broad bands to be worn over the forehead, thereby supporting the load with the neck.[30]

At Dyea the passengers and their outfits were lightered ashore in a scow where everyone was then consumed by his own plans to ascend the pass as soon as possible, as the time was already early June. Dyea consisted of a single building, the Healy and Wilson trading post and an Indian camp. The natives lived in tents or "rude wooden huts" close to the shore. The men were strong and "sullen looking," clothed in "cheap civilized garb" - overalls, a Guernsey jacket and straw hats. The women "were neither beautiful nor attractive," having covered their faces with a black mixture of soot and grease or had tattooed black stripes across their chins.[31] After negotiations with these residents of Dyea had been completed, the whole of the population, permanent and transient, began moving up the valley.[32] The Indians had patience and endurance for carrying the heavy loads over long distances. One young adolescent boy who weighed not more than 80 pounds was carrying a pack of 100 pounds.[33]

Healy and Wilson had opened a horse trail part way up the valley and were packing goods in a limited quantity to Sheep Camp at a rate of 5 1/2¢ per pound, half of what the Indians charged. Some Indians poled their loads in dugout canoes up the Dyea River, while the foot travellers followed a tiresome trail over loose gravel and sand alongside and across the shallow river. The valley narrowed as the party reached Sheep Camp, exhausted and hungry, to a meal of "slapjacks" and the inevitable bacon prepared by the guide.

At Sheep Camp, Spurr engaged Indians to pack his goods to the summit as the traders' horses could go no further. They had paid the storekeeper 5¢ per pound for the first 13 miles while the Indians demanded and received 6¢ per pound for the remainder of the distance to Lake Lindeman.

Spurr and his Indian packers reached Stone House in the afternoon where, at the insistence of the Indians, they waited until the sun set before the trek was continued over the newly crusted snowfield. Marching under the northern twilight, the entourage reached Lake Lindeman at 9 A.M. of a rainy June day. The shores of the lake were already occupied by several other camps. Spurr was able to purchase a boat already constructed, giving some evidence regarding the state of the industry at the lake head. He had been forced to leave his unwieldy load of lumber at Dyea because of the unwillingness of the packers to carry it over the pass. The boat, dory in design, was christened *Skookum* and the party of four left in the company of another boatload of miners. The crossing of Lake Lindeman was uneventful and the partially unloaded boat was "lined" through the narrow rocky channel joining it to Lake Bennett. The rest of the outfit was packed around the short stretch of river in case of an accident with the boat.

The head of Lake Bennett was occupied by more camps and a portable sawmill that had been dragged in over the pass during the winter of 1895-96. The lack of communication in the country became readily apparent at this point, as no knowledge of this machine and its product was available along the trail.[34]

The winds of Lake Bennett forced the party constantly to bail out the water breaking waves brought into the boat. Rough seas forced the party ashore several times to await more favourable conditions while Tagish Lake, notorious for winds, was crossed without incident. At the lower end of Tagish, the party camped at a "wretched" Indian settlement where they were able to trade some of their supplies for a large fish to supplement their now monotonous diet of "slapjacks," beans and bacon. While they rested, a man and his two sons passed through the camp. They had brought horses into the country over the Chilkoot with the intention of farming but had been forced to give up in failure, abandoning their horses in favour of escaping from the grip of the inhospitable Yukon.[35]

At the head of the "famous canyon" of the Lewes, a number of boats were gathered. Various men packed their goods around the gorge.

A crude windlass arrangement had been installed on the portage to drag the empty boats overland rather than risk losing them in the white water. Spurr, with the aid of two "pioneers," rode the half empty boat through the canyon and camped below it that night. The next morning the craft was emptied and lined through the shallow, relatively quiet water near the shore to a point below the White Horse Rapids. A scow too large to guide in that manner shot through the centre of the rapids without mishap save a severe soaking in the plunging water.[36] Others had not been so lucky:

> On the shore below the rapids we found flour sacks, valises, boxes and splintered boards, mementoes of poor fellows less lucky than ourselves.[37]

The next day, fresh from their camp at the mouth of the Tahkeena (Takhini) River, the party of geologists set sail down the Yukon River for the gold fields at Forty Mile and Circle City, ironically unaware at that time of the potential that lay buried in the gravel of the Klondike River.

The Chilkoot Pass, Spring 1897

J.H.E. Secretan, April 1897. William Ogilvie sent his first report of the discoveries made by George Carmack to Ottawa in September 1896. It was probably this news and Ogilvie's subsequent reports through the winter of 1896-97 that induced J.H.E. Secretan, then resident in Ottawa, to organize a company of adventurers to seek their fortunes in the Yukon.[38] Passage was taken by the group to Vancouver and by ferry to Victoria where passage could be obtained on a ship headed north to Juneau. On April 15, 1897 Secretan secured passage aboard the *Topeka* for his companions, remaining in Victoria to purchase the outfit while his company headed north. Secretan, the outfit completed, followed his men up the coast aboard the *Mexico* to Juneau on April 25, 1897. There he encountered the small fleet of boats - the *Rustler*, *Gasoline* and *Alert* - which operated between Juneau and Dyea. Secretan chose to go aboard the *Alert* which deposited him a good distance offshore at Dyea where the water was so shallow that he was forced to shoulder his Peterborough canoe and wade ashore. According to Secretan, the water shoaled to four inches at "a good mile" from dry land.[39]

Once ashore he enjoyed the hospitality of Healy and Wilson's trader Sam Heron and learned that his men had arrived at Dyea aboard "a direct descendant of Noah's Ark," the *Gasoline*, which had broken down mechanically enroute, forcing a resort to sails to complete the journey.[40] From Heron he also learned the location of his company's camp. They were not alone; the population of Dyea on May 1, 1897 comprised 1000 people. Their camp at the mouth of "Dyea Canon," nine miles from the coast, was crowded by "every conceivable species of human being."

The three tons of supplies purchased by Secretan in Victoria were put ashore from the *Alert*. The group set about building small flat-bottomed boats, each about 15 feet long. These were loaded and dragged up the shallow Taiya River to a point six miles from Dyea. From the head of navigation everything had to be carried. Indian packers were hired to pack the supplies over the mountain pass. Secretan commented on the unreliability of the packers who apparently had not improved from the days of William Ogilvie's passage. Services were suspended "upon the slightest provocation" of more money from the other travellers.[41]

As early as the spring of 1897, mechanization had come to the Chilkoot, indicating the growing quantity of traffic moving over the pass. An "enterprising individual" had established a wire cable hoist on the final ascent to the pass. Two "poor wretched horses" powered the machine that dragged sleigh-loads the last 600 feet to the summit for 1 1/2¢ a pound. The operator was making $150 a day from his ingenuity.

Secretan climbed to the summit and over on May 8, 1897. He left his camp on the southern slope in the rain which changed to snow as he neared the pass. The south winds soon generated a blizzard - "With bewildering rapidity the air became filled with particles of whirling snow, and in five minutes I could only faintly distinguish the heels of the man immediately ahead of me..."[42] The physical exertion "throws you into violent perspiration, and when you stop for a moment to collect your very marrow, chilling you to the core."[43] The wind roared through the pass incessantly, and when the sun shone, its "dazzling" reflection from the snow "literally" burnt the skin from the face, and yet the labouring men passed the summit, piled with tons of supplies all but lost under the heavy snowfall.

The nine miles to Lindeman were basically downhill, through the frozen lakes, over ridges, through valleys covered in melting snow. Although a welcome change from the inching progress up the southern slope, the soft, mushy, slippery snow made Lake Lindeman and the end of the trail a welcome signt.

The camp at the head of Lindeman grew daily through the spring of 1897 as men hopeful of success arrived via the Chilkoot. A community of men from a variety of backgrounds, sharing a common goal and common problems, waited for the unsafe ice to break up. As the sun continued to climb in the skies, the day had nearly replaced night.

On June 1, 1897 the Secretan party arrived at Bennett in the light and maneuverable Peterborough canoes. In the bustling community at the head of Lake Bennett everyone was building boats.[44] A "miserable wheezy portable sawmill" worried planks off the freshly felled trees. Men waited to carry each new board away to his own "boat yard" where they were instantly transformed into a boat. Those who couldn't wait or afford the price whipsawed their own lumber. The 400 men camped at Lake Bennett were making as many designs of "death-dealing conveyances." "Once in a while you would see something resembling a boat, but not often," while the resemblance seemed to derive mainly from the fact that generally the products were rectangular in plan and pointed on one end.[45] Secretan designed his own scow and built it in three days, obviously financially capable of availing himself of the machine-sawn lumber. The 6000-pound outfit was loaded aboard and the "motley mob," growing in size every day, was left behind.

The trip through the lakes to Miles Canyon was uneventful. Upon leaving the camp at Caribou Crossing (Carcross) at the lower end of Bennett Lake, Secretan observed

> It was a great relief to get away from the madding crowd - to escape, if only temporarily, from the filth of the huddled-up encampments and the chronic profanity...[46]

Although the camps on the lake shores were generally occupied by men of renewed hope having survived the trek inland, the inevitable delay and frustration made life in the crowded tent towns unattractive. Yet the numbers of men were only a fraction of what they would eventually be, and conditions for many of the inexperienced would remain difficult as space and materials became more and more limited.

A flag on the bank of the Yukon River warned the approach of Miles Canyon as the river narrowed and the current became noticeably quicker. The dark cleft with its high basaltic walls came into view, the winter's ice still clinging to the rocks as a ledge above the water. Secretan had little problem running through the very quick water of the canyon with the scow *Eva* they had constructed and christened on Lake Bennett towing the two canoes behind. The craft was put ashore to explore the White Horse Rapids.[47]

Before arriving at this point, he had attempted to gain some intelligent description of the obstacle they had just half-defeated. Its legend and reputation for infamy had already been well established and was embellished with each repetition.[48] Without detracting from the reputation, Secretan recorded

> At two p.m., the *Eva*, once more dismantled, and everything covered with tarpaulins, was cut loose, and at 2:02 or therabouts she was safely moored below the much respected 'White Horse'.[49]

Such was the White Horse Rapids in the spring of 1897. The Secretan party continued to Dawson without incident.

Edward Lung, May 1897. An unemployed Tacoma accountant, Edward Lung, and his partner Bill Stacey, set sail in the coastal steamer *City of Mexico* for the north. On May 24, 1897 they landed at Juneau and clambered aboard the crowded freighter *Rustler*, which dumped them unceremoniously on the beach at Dyea. From the beach, a hired Indian packer poled the partners' supplies up the Taiya River to the "head of navigation" where the outfit was divided into packs of 65-75 pounds each and then packed bodily to Sheep Camp, the Scales and over the summit. Making two trips per day, Lung and Stacey took a week to move their goods from Sheep Camp to the summit:[50]

> Our tremendous loads cut into our backs and weighed heavy against our straining muscles. My seven-foot whipsaw was the most awkward to carry; but the heaviest and most unwieldy was my large Yukon sled. Stacey and I each had one, and it was necessary to carry them on our backs to scale that last thousand feet up the mountain.[51]

Near the end of the ordeal, in the middle of June, Lung fell victim to the insidious qualities of a pot of sour beans and collapsed, convinced of his certain death from a self-diagnosed case of ptomaine poisoning. Liberal doses of a patent medicine pain killer and some days of inactivity helped Lung to recover enough to proceed. Spurred on by the warming temperatures and melting ice which threatened to delay their reaching Lindeman, they raced over the rotting ice of Long and Deep lakes. The trail across the ice showed signs of the passing of hundreds of others before them.[52] They reached the shores of Lake Lindeman through a "tunnel-like gorge" before the ice gave out, but the season was already well advanced:

> Hundreds of stampeders worked near us building boats. Their tremendous driving energy seemed to charge the very atmosphere. The whine of the whipsaws, the metallic pounding of hammer on nails, the smell of fresh lumber and pitch permeated the air.[53]

The passage through camp of an outward-bound miner from the Klondike with a pack sack heavy with gold encouraged still further the exhilerated men. There was gold for the picking and only the rapidly thawing ice barred the way.

Ten days after Stacey and Lung had arrived, the ice finally began to move out of the lake. Within hours the clear water was dotted with boats and barges. The fleet headed north into Lake Bennett through the narrow mile of rapids without any trouble.[54] Joined by "hundreds" of other boats they continued, only to be delayed by a storm on the narrow lake. The uneventful hours gave rise to speculation and planning for the challenge of the oft-rumoured Miles Canyon and White Horse Rapids. On July 7, the party shot through the five-eights of a mile long Mile Canyon in eight minutes.[55] Establishing a camp at a landing above the Rapids, they surveyed the rushing water and decided against attempting to run through:

> Quickly, we sorted our goods, loading ourselves down like pack horses with seventy-five to hundred-pound packs each. It was easy to find the trail, which went up a hill and then followed along the Whitehorse at a little distance parallel with the river, and it was evident that hundreds of other feet had plodded over this narrow, dusty trail...
>
> At last, we struggled to the end of the first weary mile below the Whitehorse, where the portage ended.[56]

Exhausted by the mosquito-infested portage, the party decided to run the rapids against their previous better judgement. Other miners lined their boats down the edge or dragged them over the portage on skids, but Lung and Stacey and their two paying passengers braved the foaming torrent successfully, landing amid the wreckage of other boats at the bottom of the rapids. Other boats were being repaired and supplies were being dried out by less fortunate owners.[57] Lung and Stacey reloaded their boat and set out for Dawson, the Chilkoot Pass and the major obstacles forgotten for the gold they knew was waiting.

The Mountain Trails, Fall 1897

The summer of 1897 brought hordes of goldseekers eager for a share of the fabulous wealth heralded by the passengers and cargoes of the *Portland* and *Excelsior*. Men like Secretan and Lung knew of the new discoveries but were unaware of their magnitude. In 1896 men numbering in the hundreds had crossed the Chilkoot headed for the diggings on the Fortymile River or on Birch Creek at Circle City. In the spring of 1897 the ranks of returning miners were swelled with those attracted by the news that had leaked out of the new diggings in the Klondike River valley. Many of the men were seasoned prospectors; only a few of the people on the trail were unprepared novices. However, the majority of men and women who landed on the beach at Dyea and at

Moore's settlement at the mouth of the Skagway River in August of 1897 were desperately ignorant and poorly prepared for what lay ahead. This latter group had left Seattle, Victoria, or the other west coast ports in unparalleled haste. The gold that had arrived fresh from the sluice boxes on the Klondike had acted on their imaginations, driving them north into hardship and disappointment. With this unprecedented onslaught of humanity, conditions on the access routes deteriorated dramatically under the tread of thousands of tramping feet and iron-shod hooves.

Deterioration of the White Pass trail. Steamers continued to arrive with increasing frequency from the south, spilling their cargoes of hopeful yet bewildered men, each with his cumbersome ton of life-sustaining supplies on the beach. The arrival of each succeeding ship increased the confusion on the already crowded shore. Skagway, the newly named and newly surveyed town that had engulfed Moore's homestead, was booming. The streets swarmed with miners who gathered in the hastily erected tent saloons to discuss the forthcoming trek over the White Pass. Conditions on the trail were of constant concern throughout the fall of 1897 as the traffic increased unceasingly. Heavily loaded wagons, carts, horses and men crowded the road leading out of Skagway toward the mountains.

Promoters of both the Chilkoot and White Pass trails were actively soliciting among the undecided miners. One group, of which Robert Kirk was a member, had been approached by both interests. Unable to decide, they arranged to inspect both routes before beginning to move their supplies from the ship. Travelling light, Kirk explored the established trail from the Skagway to the summit of the White Pass. He was not impressed by the trail and failed to understand why the route led over a series of steep mountain ridges and through the intervening swampy ravines instead of following the river more closely, which he considered more logical and practical. The gradients of the hills were so great they required switchbacks both going up and coming down, while boulders and mudholes added further difficulties to the tortuous course. Although the White Pass trail had not yet reached its worst condition, Kirk was convinced by what he saw that the Chilkoot, whatever it was like, would be an improvement. His group was transported to Dyea on the same ship which had brought them to Skagway.[58] Robert Kirk's group was not alone in its abandonment of the White Pass trail as conditions continued to deteriorate under the onslaught of men.

Tappan Adney reports on the trails.

Skagway and the White Pass. Tappan Adney, a special correspondent for the popular *Harper's Weekly*, left Victoria on August 15, 1897 on the steamer *Islander* bound for Skagway. Victora seethed with the rush. Men were buying and selling "gold-mining" supplies, garnering information about their new outfit, much of which they had not the slightest idea of how to operate, and making the all-important arrangements for transportation north. Many of these "argonauts" were on the ship with Adney and shared his concerns.

At the first port of call, Juneau, the *Islander* was boarded by a United States customs official. Fears about the payment of customs duties on outfits purchased in Canada to be landed on American soil were confirmed and duty was to be collected on all items of the outfit not purchased in the United States. The owners were told they could ship the goods "in bond" through the thin strip of American territory they must cross but would be allowed to use the necessities - tents, blankets and cooking utensils. Food for the stay in Skagway or Dyea should be purchased in Juneau. Duty would have to be paid on horses the miners intended on using to pack goods over the trail. Finally, the American official advised wariness, as Skagway, the new boomtown only weeks old, teamed with thieves who preyed on the piles of cached supplies. The picture was not inviting. Those men who had purchased their outfits in an American port worried about the attitude of the Canadian customs officials and were told that "this agreement" had been reached, supposedly to speed the miners on their way with a minimum of hardship.[59]

The experiences awaiting the hopeful hordes were, in general, a result of false expectations and a lack of preparation. On board the *Islander* was G.H. Escolme of the Alaskan and Northwestern Territories Trading Company who did little to encourage caution with his exaggerated enthusiasm for future development:

> We have cut a trail over the summit from Skagway, at a cost of $10,000. We own the town side of Skagway, and are building wharves, etc. We cut the trail mainly to prospect for the railroad...It is a private trail; but we are about the only people who are not taxing the miners, and we don't want to do so at any time. We expect to get a few miles of the railroad built this fall;...One of my present purposes is to try to reduce the price of packing, which is now 20 cents a pound, and we mean to see that miners get supplies at a reasonable cost.[60]

Adney and others had landed at Juneau and the stories they had received in answer to their insatiable quest for information contradicted Mr. Escolme's encouraging outlook. Only one man could be found who agreed that the White Pass trail was alright. None of the other stories were alike, except that they told of hardship beyond comprehension.[61] Back on board the ship, the passengers organized and appointed a committee to unload and guard the cargo against thieves. The seeds of apprehension that had been sown began to grow.

On August 21, 1897 the ship steamed into the little bay off the tent city of Skagway. The unloading began immediately. The horses and hay were put into large scows and towed with row boats to the beach. Passengers were coaxed into a fleet of rowboats and Indian canoes and taken ashore for 25¢ each. Once on shore the activity was overwhelming:

> There are great crowds of men rowing in boats to the beach, then clamouring out in rubber boots and packing their stuff, and setting it down in little piles out of reach of the tide. Here are little groups of men resting with their outfits. Horses are tethered out singly and in groups. Tents there are of every size and kind, and men cooking over large sheet iron stoves set up outside. Behind there are more tents and men, and piles of merchandise and hay and bacon smoking, men loading bags and bales of hay upon horses and starting off...in the

> direction of a grove of small cottonwoods, beyond which lies the trail towards While Pass.62

When Adney arrived on August 21, the infant Skagway was growing rapidly. The rows of tents were added to daily, most of the land had been marked into lots and small clearings appeared to sprout more A-shaped tents. Frame buildings were barely finished when they opened their doors as hotels and restaurants along the rutted main street of the new town.

Everyone wondered about the condition of the trail and his own ability to meet the challenge. Excitement generated by the gold was tempered by apprehension and anxiety as those returning from the trail spoke of the terrible ordeal. Opinions of how best to accomplish the immense task of packing a one-year supply of provisions over the trail varied with each inquiry, but the general concensus was that the trail would be almost intolerable for man or beast in a short while. Discouraged men coming down from the trail had nothing to encourage those preparing to ascend the White Pass.63 By August 21, hired packers were charging 25¢-30¢ a pound. The price of horses rose and the price of provisions dropped as more and more men tried to sell out and escape.

While Adney waited, one group of particularly disgruntled men returned from the trail, loaded their supplies on a boat and paddled off to Dyea. They stated the trail was impassable and closed. The blockage was disheartening to those stranded with a ton of supplies to move. All agreed it was the inexperienced and those unaccustomed to the hard physical labour that were causing all the trouble while the trail they stumbled over was beaten into a muddy trough. Adney compared the mood to an army in retreat:

> Those in front are stubbornly fighting their way; they are moving slowly, but they will get over. Behind there are the stragglers, who in turn become the beaten rabble in the rear of the flight.64

Sensing a general movement to Dyea, Adney decided to send his goods via the Chilkoot trail. His supplies of food and precious camera equipment went by boat to Dyea in charge of a professional packer:

> ...to team it thence to the head of canoe navigation; there put it on his pack-train, which will carry it to The Scales, which is at the foot of the summit; there two men will be given us to help us pack our stuff over the summit - a distance of from three-quarters of a mile to a mile to Crater Lake; there we will have to ferry it over the lake, when it will be taken on a burro train to Long Lake, where there is another ferry, and then again on the burros to Lake Lindeman, which is the point of departure.65

These seemingly complicated arrangements were to cost the correspondent his eight horses valued at $200 each which amounted to almost 50¢ per pound for the 3000-pound outfit. In addition, Adney would be required to work alongside the packers for the four to five days it would take to reach Lindeman.

In the meantime, Adney, always the conscientious reporter, prepared to reconnoitre the White Pass trail. The trail wound its way over the hills and through the intervening valleys and gulches which were narrow, muddy and boulder strewn. Trees and bushes grew heavily, overhanging and covering the treacherous mud holes, the worst of which had been corduroyed. Even where the trail had a firm bottom, the soil had been churned into a "chocolate-coloured" mud which crawled up on men and horses, colouring everything with a brown stain. In places, the rocks were literally chiselled by the thousands of iron-shod horse hooves which had pounded over them. Periodically the correspondent stumbled into an area heavy with the stench of dead and rotting horses which littered the moist undergrowth.

At the foot of Porcupine Hill a corduroy bridge crossed the Porcupine Creek to one of the many spontaneous tent cities on the trail. It was crowded with men moving both up and down the trail in a seemingly endless chain of packing relays, as well as those who had no intention of returning as they had given up in despair:

> Tents and piles of goods are scattered thickly along the trail. No one knows how many people there are. We guess five thousand - there may be more - and two thousand head of horses.[66]

The men, some of whom had been on the trail through two weeks of rain, walked in mud, worked in mud, pitched their tents in mud, slept in mud and had only made it as far as Porcupine Creek. They were tired and covered with the brown slime from head to foot. Some of the parties that had managed to reach the summit then gave up in disgust, selling their outfits for whatever they could get. The trail was lined with discarded supplies of all kinds, especially sawn boat lumber, "enough, as one person said, to make a corduroy road the length of the trail."[67]

The situation for many men was hopeless, as they were powerless in the face of the steadily deteriorating conditions. Predictions that the trail would soon have to be closed due to the incessant rain and traffic were being passed along the trail. Anxious queries about the trail through Dyea followed charges of misrepresentation about the White Pass trail. The heavily loaded horses slipped on the slick wet rocks, sometimes plunging headlong down steep slopes or walked into deep mud holes and had to be unloaded before they could move. Often injuries resulted and the animal had to be destroyed, or abandoned by men who no longer cared. It was no use going around the mud as the swamp was all the same. The only answer was to cover the worst stretches and mud holes with a log corduroy. Adney estimated about 20 horses had actually been killed while many more were injured and the dead were joined at a rate of four a day, increasing as the trail worsened.[68]

On August 25, a rope was put across the trail at the end of the wagon road near the "Foot of the Hill" and a guard refused to allow anyone on to the trail as crews of men went to work voluntarily to put the trail in order. Adney gave up his attempt to cross the White Pass and rendezvoused with his supplies, which he thought were on their way via the Chilkoot.

The Chilkoot trail, August 1897. Adney arrived in Dyea to discover that his outfit had not moved off the beach and much of it had been soaked by salt water. The bacon, flour and tinned food were salvaged but not his irreplacable cameras and film. The mess was sorted out and Adney was able to scrounge inadequate substitutes for the lost equipment before he was off again on the much more agreeable Chilkoot trail.

Miners were moving slowly, taking weeks instead of days to cross the summit, but nonetheless the situation was remarkably better than the White Pass. Adney followed his pack train to Finnigan's Point on August 31, in the company of others poling loaded scows on the Taiya River, and using hand carts, wagons or horses on the roads and the strength of their backs to move their supplies. At Finnigan's Point, a rude settlement consisting of 20 tents, a saloon, a restaurant and a blacksmith offered the weary miner its meager services. A meal of beans and bacon, bread and butter cost 75¢.[69]

On September 12 Adney arrived in Sheep Camp. The stopover spot for miners over the years had mushroomed into a town of tents sprawling under the spruce trees along the stony banks of the Taiya River. The camp was situated at the upper edge of the treeline and as such, made a natural stopping point for miners waiting for the weather on the pass to clear or to rest as wood for cooking and warmth was not again available before the summit was crossed. The population had swelled to several hundred horses and many more men. Men were waiting, discouraged by the mammoth task and the bad weather and snow on the summit. A "great swarm" of men, including "hangers-on" from Juneau, deserters from United States revenue cutters and a great many men "who had not the wit or presence of mind, to recognize a gold-mine," waited for a variety of reasons. Among these men the professional gamblers plied their trade.[70]

In September 1897 Sheep Camp contained, in addition to the numerous tents, two wooden frame buildings. A large cloth announced a hotel built of rough-sawn lumber. The accommodation offered the miners was basic. One large room served as a dining hall during the day and its floor "one gigantic mattress" for lodgers at night. By nine o'clock in the evening, the floor was covered with exhausted packers.[71]

On September 14, 1897 Adney moved out with his provisions as he had made arrangements to have them packed to Crater Lake for 12¢ per pound. Adney climbed to the Scales, a relatively level area directly below the summit, preceded and followed by a chain of burdened men and horses. The Scales were dotted with tents and piles of baggage with men busily making the huge piles into packs which they hoisted on their backs:

> They walk to the base of the cliff, with a stout alpenstock in hand. They start to climb a narrow foot-trail that goes up, up, up. The rock and earth are gray. The packers and packs have disappeared. There is nothing but the gray wall of rock and earth. But stop! Look more closely. The eye catches movement. The mountain is alive. There is a continuous moving train; they are perceptible only by their movement, just as ants are. The moving train is zigzagging across the towering face of the precipice, up, up, into the sky, even at the very top. See! They are going against the sky! They are human beings, but never did men look so small.[72]

Other men came down the 45-degree rock slope empty, once again to hoist a pack to their shoulders and trudge back up again over the brink across the rocky but level summit and down to the edge of Crater Lake in a seemingly endless and ceaseless chain.[73]

At Crater Lake, three boatmen plied a ferrying trade for 1¢ per pound or $40 per day for the use of one of their three boats. Although they made a great deal of money, the conditions of the place were not comfortable. There was not a flat place to pitch a tent and everything was continually wet and cold.[74] Yet the human train dumped ton after ton of goods at the summit and around the lake only to pick it up and move it farther down the trail.

At the north end of Long Lake, Adney waited through a raging storm which threatened to level the camp and blow the wreckage and supplies into the lake. There were 50 tents set among the stunted spruce trees, the first supply of wood since the trees at Sheep Camp. The trees were often a foot or more thick with a scrubby, sprawling height of ten to twelve feet. Adney used the ferry service available on Long and Deep Lakes, but before moving on to Lake Lindeman, he went back across the pass to rescue his boat lumber which had been left because no one would pack the awkward board. Having convinced a packer to take it over, he returned, bringing news of the flash flood which had washed over the camp at Stone House and Sheep Camp, destroying a great deal of the miners' supplies and tents in both places. Remarkably, only one life was lost. The flood on the 18th of September determined the fate of many of the indecisive goldseekers who wavered and decided the effort was not worth the chance reward.[75]

Renewed enthusiasm and the "shipyards" of Lake Lindeman. An air of relief and a change of attitude accompanied the 800-foot drop in elevation to the "new and smiling country" on the shores of Lake Lindeman. The new town comprised 120 tents and 60 or more improvised shipyards. Half a dozen saw pits produced lumber for the would-be shipwrights who worked busily with a new and purposeful air, having reached a major milestone on the way to the gold fields.[76] Everyone was anxious to be off. As Adney arrived, a fleet of seven boats left the shore with as many as ten leaving every day thereafter.[77]

Boat-building was the chief occupation, excluding all others as the summer ended:

> ...but the favorite and typical boat is a great flat-bottomed skiff, holding two or three tons; in length over all, twenty-two to twenty-five feet; beam, six or seven feet; sides somewhat flare; the stern wide and square; drawing two feet of water when loaded, with six to ten inches of freeboard; rigged for four oars, with steering-oar behind. Some of these were thirty-five feet in length...Well forward, a stout mast is stepped, upon which is rigged, sometimes, a sprit sail, but usually a large square sail made generally from a large canvas tarpaulin.[78]

If ever the miner needed a partner, it was at Lake Lindeman. Many fragile partnerships, consisting of groups of two and often more, had survived the trek over the Chilkoot. The larger parties could and did send men ahead to secure a source of timber and begin the arduous task of making board lumber for the boat. Good timber was not available on the shores of the lake; a trek of two to five miles away from the camp was necessary, a distance that increased with time as the demand for lumber grew. Depending on the distance from the lake, the felled trees were generally whipsawed into boards on the site. The "saw pit" was a raised platform upon which the log was laid. With one man on top of the log and one beneath it, the boards were argued and cursed off the log with the aid of a long whipsaw. The boards were narrow, soft and easily broken. The spruce was a poor quality and few other species of tree were available save some small pine trees. The boards, an inch thick, were transformed into a boat. Seams were caulked with pitch and oakum, often to no avail as the green lumber shrank before the launching and the completed craft leaked badly. Therefore supplies were loaded into the boat on a platform of slats which allowed the water to accumulate beneath the goods harmlessly before it was bailed out.

The air at Lindeman was optimistic. The miners had survived the Chilkoot and could once again look forward to the promise of the gold fields. This renewed certainty was manifest in the launching of the boat. It was a major accomplishment, accompanied by a "fusilade" of revolver shots and cheers. Adney left Lake Lindeman under the similar situation in a boat built from lumber brought over the Chilkoot. The boat, 23 feet long and 6 feet wide, was loaded with his 1500-pound cargo for the continuation of his journey.[79]

Conclusion

Men, horses and tons of supplies continued to pour ashore at Dyea and Skagway. Traffic on the Chilkoot trail moved steadily if not effortlessly to the head of Lake Lindeman. Many miners had crossed the mountain passes in time to complete the river journey to Dawson. A great many more were too late as the freezing lakes blocked further progress. Although it was possible to move supplies over the frozen water route on sleds, most stopped to swell the population of the transient towns of Lindeman and Bennett.

Traffic had come to a halt on the White Pass trail in the latter part of August, causing a backup in the human stream which had flowed over the pass. Although the forced closure undertaken by one of the hastily organized miners committees in Skagway had effected some repair and improvement of the trail, traffic was not to resume again until the unbearable mud froze and snow covered the hideous decaying carcasses of the thousands of horses that had died on the trail during the brief late summer. The White Pass or Skagway trail had become known to the miners as the "dead horse" trail.

In early October 1897, Major J.M. Walsh, recently appointed Commissioner of the Provisional District of the Yukon, arrived in Skagway on his way to assume his duties in Dawson. The season was seriously advanced and like the miners who had arrived in the boomtown, Walsh was confronted by a discouraging situation. Rain fell incessantly, packing costs had reached "a high point," and the news coming off the trail told only of the impossibility of reaching the lakes which lay beyond the mountains. At that point, 3200 pack horses lay dead on the White Pass trail.[80] Although the Commissioner's party had little choice but to cross via the Chilkoot Pass, which Walsh described as "a good mountain pass," the Skagway trail was inspected, shocking the retired veteran of the North West Mounted Police:

> The Skagway trail is all that it has been described to be, such a scene of havoc and destruction as we encountered through the whole length of the White Pass can scarcely be imagined. Thousands of pack horses lay

> dead along the way, sometimes in bunches under the cliff with pack saddles and packs where they had fallen from the rocks above, sometimes in a tangled mass, filling the mudholes and furnishing the only footing for our poor pack animals on the march - often I regret to say, exhausted but still alive, a fact that we were unaware of until after the miserable wretches turned beneath the hoofs of our cavalcade. The eyeless sockets of the pack animals everywhere accounted for the myriad of ravens all along the road. The inhumanity which this trail has been witness to, the heart-breaking sufferings which so many have undergone, cannot be imagined. They certainly cannot be described.[81]

As 1897 drew to a close, the gold rush through the White Pass contained little of the glory associated with the golden riches in the Klondike River valley. Winter descended on the passes, cold and white, and traffic once again began to move up the trail. The beginning of the winter of 1897-98 brought a period of gold rush history to an end. Although the numbers of men landing at the head of Lynn Canal would not decrease, their mad disorganized swarming was gone for there were those who wished to alter the chaotic situation for commercial reasons. The very size of the crowds generated a demand for more sophisticated transport systems. Promoters and entrepreneurs were already hard at work to eliminate the backs of men and horses as the sole means of transporting goods from sea level to the headwaters of the Yukon River. Cable tramways were planned for the Chilkoot Pass and a wagon road and steam railway were planned for the White Pass. These improvements destined for the American slope of the passes were begun in December of 1897 and continued through 1898, while plans were made to extend river transport up the Yukon from Dawson.

The Canadian government, not unlike private enterprise, was induced to react to the situation to protect its sovereignty over the Yukon territory, as well as to control access to Canadian territory and collect substantial customs duties at the border. The North West Mounted Police were strengthened to guard the passes and the crowded gold rush route, ensuring observance of Canadian laws and regulations, bringing much needed order to the stampede. The federal government gained momentum and control over the internal affairs of the Yukon district and the gold fields at Dawson. The rush was by no means over, but the coming of mechanized transport and the police would alter its haphazard and chaotic beginnings.

THE NORTH WEST MOUNTED POLICE FORCE IN THE YUKON

Establishment of Law and Order

In May 1893 the Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs in Ottawa received a letter of complaint from the farthest corner of the Dominion. The stern Right Reverend W.C. Bompas, Bishop of Selkirk,[1] in the remote Yukon mission, expressed concern for the spiritual and moral well-being of the natives who were beginning to come under the influence of the miners at Fortymile Creek. On August 26, 1893 the Deputy Superintendent relayed the complaint for the information of Frederick White, Comptroller of the North West Mounted Police. Bishop Bompas's letter contained

> ...a statement of the condition of matters obtaining in that country, owing to the presence of miners therein, and their manufacture of intoxicants, and the demoralization which has consequently occurred among the Indians of that region, through not only intoxicants having been given them by the miners but owing to the Indians themselves having acquired a knowledge of the manufacture of the same.[2]

Bompas indicated that 210 miners had spent the winter near his new St. John's Mission and that plans were being made to put a large mining dredge on the Stewart River. As the situation could only worsen, Bompas requested that the North West Mounted Police locate a detachment at Fortymile Creek to keep order and enforce the liquor laws.[3] Bishop Bompas had provided the excuse the government needed to assert Canadian authority on the distant frontier by deploying the North West Mounted Police to occupy the territory and impose the laws and tax of the Dominion.

The Bishop's complaint received relatively prompt action. Although it was impossible to send the North West Mounted Police to the distant territory in the time remaining in 1893,[4] an amendment was made to the Liquor License Ordinance of 1891-92 on September 16, 1893 which brought more territory under the jurisdiction of the North West Territories Act to stem the flow of liquor into the Yukon.[5]

Early in 1894 an Order-in-Council appointed Inspector Charles Constantine a special Commissioner of Police within the Northwest Territories and he was summarily dispatched to the Yukon district. He was charged with regulating traffic of intoxicating liquor, administering lands containing precious metals, collecting customs duties, protecting the Indian population and administering justice generally.[6] Constantine, called an "Agent of the Dominion Government," was briefed by the various government departments to whom he would owe duties and was advised to "exercise, discreetly, but without risk of complications, the power conferred upon him by his several commissions."[7]

Inspector Constantine and the Yukon in 1894

The Inspector left Ottawa for Victoria via Chicago where he was to confer with the officers of the North American Transportation and Trading Company who had interests in the Yukon.[8] In Broadview, Northwest Territories, he met Staff-Sergeant Charles Brown who was to be his "clerk and Constable" in the Yukon. On June 17 they arrived in Victoria, but were delayed, finally reaching Dai-Yah (Dyea) on June 29. Having supplied his small expedition at Juneau with all the necessary food and equipment, including boat-building tools, Constantine began arranging to have the goods packed into the interior. His dealings with the Tlingits were typically frustrating. Moved to angry indignation, he remarked:

> The Indians here seem to be able to take in but one idea, and that is how much they can get out of you, and being at their mercy as to packing I had, as a rule, to submit to their extortion.[9]

Early on Sunday, July 1, 1894, Constantine started for the summit with seven packs weighing 800 pounds, leaving 300 pounds of dispensable supplies in Dyea as a protest against the "exhorbitant" charge of 15¢ a pound for packing the outfit to Lake Lindeman. At mid-day, August 7, Constantine and Brown reached Fort Cudahy, having lost a total of 16 days to bad weather and boat building. The trip had been difficult but without serious incident.[10]

Constantine spent four weeks in the gold diggings of Fortymile Creek, constantly observing the country and questioning the residents for his report to Ottawa. As the short, descriptive report was intended to serve as the basis for discussion by government officials located across the continent, it covered all aspects of the access routes into the Yukon from the south to detailed descriptions of the settlement at Cudahy and Bishop Bompas's St. John Mission. Constantine's observation centred on the area of Forty Mile in answer to the complaints received about the community of miners and Indians there.[11]

Liquor was at the heart of the stern Bishop's concern as it led to the moral corruption of his charges. Constantine noted that the liquor traffic was assuming major proportions and a "strong hand" would be necessary to regulate its sale and collect government revenues. The liquor, amounting to 3000 gallons in 1893, came in over the Chilkoot and down the river in boats. A miner told Constantine that it had been a "party of whiskey men" impatient to reach the saloons at Cudahy who had first run the White Horse Rapids.[12] In addition to liquor from the outside, the Indians had learned to distill an intoxicating product known locally as "Hoo-chin-oo" from a mixture of molasses, sugar and dried fruit, all readily obtainable at the trading post. Constantine speculated that the enforcement of prohibition would be almost impossible due to the immensity of the country and the numerous remote ravines and gulches in which the illicit stills were hidden. The situation in Alaska was similar, as no attempt was made to regulate the trade and liquor was sold openly in its settlements. On the other hand, the drinking habits of the miners did not upset Constantine as much as they had the Bishop. Apart from a "general carouse" accompanied by the firing of pistols and guns when the miners arrived from the diggings in the fall, the community on the Yukon River was peaceful through the long winter. Gambling the summer's earnings was the chief pastime.[13]

The mining population of the Yukon valley was composed equally of Americans and Canadians with a number of Englishmen working in the diggings. Representing other nations were an Arab, three Armenians, a Chilean and a Greek, all appearing "to get on well together."[14]

People continued to move into the country. Constantine, before leaving Dyea on July 1, 1894, determined that 535 people had gone into the Yukon via the Chilkoot that year. Most had made it to Cudahy with a very few turned back by the terror of Miles Canyon and the White Horse Rapids. Some arriving at Fortymile River had only stayed a day or two before leaving down the river. The influx of men had been swollen by labour problems in the United States and others driven north by unemployment had brought their wives and families into the country, lending an air of permanency to the mining settlements. In 1893, the wintering population at Cudahy had numbered 260 miners but was expected to reach 500 during the winter of 1894.[15]

Local government was in the hands of the miners who, through their ad hoc committees, had so far been able to deal successfully with disputes relating to mining claims, building lots and general disagreements between the various factions of the populace.[16] The miners' chief concern regarded the fixing of the International Boundary without delay. The areas being worked on the Fortymile River were in close proximity to the suspected location of the boundary, giving rise to the problem of which mining regulations were to be in effect when working the frozen gravel.[17] The Indian population, according to Constantine's interviews, were also amenable to the coming of the "English" as they recalled with pleasure the treatment received from the Hudson's Bay Company as opposed to that by the "American" traders.[18] On the basis of what he had observed and learned through his questions, Constantine recommended the establishment of a detachment of the North West Mounted Police at the confluence of the Fortymile River with the Yukon River. The required force was to consist of two officers, one surgeon, three sergeants, three corporals and 35 or 40 constables. The immensity of the country to be regulated rendered the sizeable body of men only "sufficient" for the task at hand. Constantine added a number of qualifications to the type of men that should be recruited for Yukon duty. They should be "of large powerful build," between 22 and 30 years of age and willing to serve for a minimum of two years in the isolated territory, adding almost as an afterthought that they should be "men who do not drink." The country was frozen for eight months of the year and answers to communications sent took two months to return from the outside. The men of the Yukon detachment would be required "entirely to depend on themselves" as they were, for most of the year, completely shut off from the outside world.[19]

Once the force had been assembled and readied for departure, Constantine recommended that they not enter the Yukon district from the south as the Chilkoot Pass was not suitable for the movement of a large body of men. The cost of packing the necessary supplies and equipment sufficient for the entire detachment would also be prohibitively great.[20] The accepted method for miners to reach their diggings was the Chilkoot route as they generally could not afford the expensive steamship passage via St. Michael. However, few miners, when leaving the country, chose to pole their boats up the Yukon River to the mountain pass. A steady and exhausting day's work constituted a distance of 20 miles against the river's strong current. Many more miners chose to leave the country before freeze-up via St. Michael, a costly but less strenuous option which allowed the miner the maximum time in diggings which generally yielded only enough to keep him alive and hopeful. Constantine, on the other hand, obtained an offer from the North American Transportation Company to transport the policemen from Victoria to Forty Mile at a rate of $100 per man and their supplies at a rate of $85 to $90 per ton.[21] Although his return to the north was dependent on decisions made in Ottawa, it is readily apparent from his descriptions of his trip over the Chilkoot Pass and from his dealings with the Indian packers that he did not relish repeating that arduous experience.

There was little doubt in Constantine's mind that the North West Mounted Police were required in the Yukon to maintain law and order, but the establishment and maintenance of its facilities presented some unique problems. While rudimentary construction materials were readily available, skilled labour was not. The wages demanded were very high, ranging from $6 to $10 per day, depending on the type of work and the season of the year. Recognizing a special need, Constantine requested that a number of carpenters, a blacksmith and a couple of engineers be chosen as part of the complement of policemen to be sent north. To "stimulate and content the men" under the unusual circumstances, he asked that the working pay normally made available for work over and above normal police duties be raised to $1 or $1.50 per day for the skilled artisans.[22] The extra inducements would be necessary as the police force would arrive during an already well advanced short summer, leaving little time to construct winter quarters.

Communications between the interior and the outside were tenuous, depending largely on one scheduled mail delivery and individual voluntary messengers. The mail service would need improvement as letters not on their way north by May from eastern Canada would not arrive until May of the following year and the answer would take another year. This situation was intolerable for the operation of a police post and other government functions. Constantine recommended the expenditure of five or six thousand dollars a year to provide four mails per year. The suggested routes, via the upper Yukon and "portage" or by way of St. Michael, were to be used in early spring and late fall with no mail service for the long winter.[23]

External contact was not Constantine's only concern as the immensity of the territory would require a more efficient method of transportation than was available. The accepted method of reaching the scattered mining camps and trading posts was laboriously to pole a small boat along the river. Progress upstream was particularly difficult and time-consuming. The river and its tributaries were the highways of the country along which the chief activities of gold mining, fur trading and trapping occurred. Without mechanized transportation, Constantine considered the planned police force "useless." The suggested solution was a prefabricated, powerful, shallow draught, stern-wheeled steamboat of about 40 feet in length. This type of boat could be brought in as cargo on a regular river steamer and assembled at Fortymile River by the men of the new detachment. With a steamboat and a number of smaller craft, the police, as agents of the government, would have little difficulty carrying out their required functions.[24]

During his four weeks in the Yukon, the Inspector was able to collect over $3000 in Canadian customs duties, a task he described as distasteful. At one point, objections to the collection threatened to cause trouble but was avoided by "better counsels," a note that would characterize their collection throughout the impending rush. He was also able to collect a sum of nearly $500 in duties and fees on behalf of the Department of the Interior, presumably for the cutting of timber and cord wood on Crown land by the miners and trading companies.[25]

The task of establishing the North West Mounted Police in the Yukon River valley was enormous. The land would provide basic construction materials and a site for the new post, but all other goods would have to come from the "outside" with the policemen. Constantine returned to Moosomin via St. Michael, leaving the invaluable Staff-Sergeant Brown to assume the duties of Agent of the Dominion.

Staff-Sergeant Brown, 1894-95

The reliable Staff-Sergeant Brown remained in the Yukon during the winter of 1894-95 exclusively as an Acting Collector of Customs. He was not empowered to perform the duties of an officer of the law.[26] Although he was unable to enforce the letter of the law due to lack of authority and manpower, Brown did continue to report to Constantine regarding illicit activities. Petty thievery continued, especially stealing from the caches left by miners on the trails. Food was the item most often stolen. One such thief caught in the Birch Creek mining area at Circle City, Alaska, was ordered out of the country by his fellow miners. There were apparently those in the fraternity of the north that did not live by the "code of the north" which considered the theft of food in the remote land akin to murder.[27]

The illicit stills continued to operate all winter with Brown quietly observing and pinpointing the location of about 35 of them. The trade in liquor was the domain of a "whiskey gang" comprising a number of prominent traders, including Jack McQuesten, a long-time resident of the Yukon valley. In February 1895 Brown indicated that a force of at least 40 men would be required to maintain peace, given the state of the territory. Law and order was threatened and would become a "dead letter" unless the detachment was sent. To that time the decision to send in the police force had as yet not been made in Ottawa.[28]

In response to new small finds of gold, as many as 2000 miners were anticipated in the spring of 1895. The new "rough lot" would compound the question of law enforcement, as well as the tenuous supply situation. Brown guessed that with the trading company boats working at capacity to supply the existing population of the Yukon, food would probably be very scarce by the fall of 1895.[29] Although the tremendous influx did not occur, the Staff-Sergeant reported that in the wake of the ice, which left the river on May 15, 1895, the first of the boats of the season appeared with 200 miners. They, in turn, reported that about 400 additional men were still on the shores of Lake Bennett, building boats.[30]

Fort Constantine on the Yukon River, 1895-96

Early in 1895, L.W. Herchmer, Commissioner of the North West Mounted Police at Regina, was told by Ottawa that nothing would be done about sending the police to the Yukon that year. By spring the situation had obviously changed, but whether this was due to reports of increased mining activity is unclear. On April 29, 1895, a call for volunteers went out to all the Divisions of North West Mounted Police for a special assignment to the Yukon.[31] Following Inspector Constantine's recommendations, only those men who had at least two years remaining in their term of service with the force were eligible for consideration. The volunteers were also to be strong, hardy, intelligent and steady.[32] This admirable list of qualities was to ensure the smooth and successful operation of the new post on the Yukon River while enhancing the growing reputation of the scarlet-clad constables.

The complement of men chosen for the new detachment numbered only 20, half the number thought necessary by Constantine and Brown. The force was to be commanded by Inspector Charles Constantine, Inspector D'Arcy E. Strickland and Assistant-Surgeon A.E. Wills. Seventeen non-commissioned officers and men were chosen by the Commissioner, all unmarried and agreeable to a minimum of two years service in the Yukon.[33] The men were from widely varying backgrounds and occupational endeavours. The list is indicative of a very selective choice of men ranging in age from 22 to 35 years, with practical occupational backgrounds. Apart from an ex-hospital steward who would presumably be of help to Assistant-Surgeon Wills, there was an engineer, machinist, carpenter, blacksmith, rancher, sailor, and clerk, among others, all chosen to aid a particular aspect of operating a post that would need to be as far as possible self-sufficient in its initial establishment and subsequent operation and maintenance.

The administrators of the North West Mounted Police attempted to recognize the problems to be faced by the men in their northern duties. The effects of the cold of the Yukon could be easily ameliorated by a modification in the general issue of clothing to the men. A parka and fur leggings replaced the long fur coat, lined duck clothing was issued in lieu of the regular duck suit and "native" winter boots and mitts of unspecified design replaced the regular issue. Isolation would still be a problem as transportation was expensive and the wages for the policemen were very low. A constable was paid 50¢ a day, while the corporals and sergeants were paid 85¢ and $1.00, respectively, per day. A special allowance was payable to the members of the Yukon detachment, which in the case of the constable doubled his rate of pay and substantially increased the salary of other ranks.[34]

The small contingent of policemen left Regina on June 1, 1895 for Seattle where they detrained and boarded the steamer *Excelsior* on June 5. The trip to St. Michael was relatively uneventful except for the fact that for 13 days the ship was forced to plough through ice which lengthened the voyage. Finally, on July 3 the steamer docked at St. Michael and on July 5 the police boarded the sternwheel river steamer *P.B. Weare* for the long tedious voyage to Fort Cudahy. Early in the evening on July 24, more than seven weeks after leaving Regina, the Yukon detachment of the North West Mounted Police stood on the banks of the Yukon watching as their year's supply of equipment and foodstuffs were discharged at the foot of the small, remote settlement.[35] There was, however, little time for the volunteers to question their individual decisions as the impending winter dictated haste in the establishment of secure quarters. When the *P.B. Weare* had finished unloading at Fort Cudahy, she continued up the Yukon on July 26 and aboard her were Inspector Strickland and his party of eight would-be loggers, sent to secure timber for the new post. The men who remained began to prepare the site for the buildings. There was no mechanical assistance save the man-powered block and tackle. While the men up river to the south man-handled over 400 logs out of the bush and rafted them down to the Fortymile River, the site of construction was cleared of the one to three feet of moss that overlaid the permafrost. Construction began about three weeks after the party arrived at Fort Cudahy:

> One by one the buildings went up, first the guard-room, 30 x 22, next the barracks, 70 x 22, then the storehouse, including offices 48 x 22, then officers' quarters, one 35 x 22, the other 33 x 22, next the hospital, 33 x 22, and lastly, quarters of the staff sergeants and the assistant surgeon, each 16 x 16, eight buildings in all. The roof timbers were put on, also the slabs, which were afterwards mossed and earthed, floors laid, and finally on Monday, 7th October, 1895, the men moved into quarters, the officers about a week later.[36]

The completion of the post, named Fort Constantine after the commander of the detachment, in so short a time, attested to the quality of men chosen to secure law and order on the distant frontier of the Dominion. The new establishment, "the most northerly military or semi-military post in the British Empire," situated at 64°26' North Latitude, was considered the tangible presence of Canadian authority, ensuring its sovereignty over the Yukon country.[37]

Once the post was completed, the newcomers to the Yukon settled into a well-disciplined daily routine. The long hours of hard work constructing the post were replaced with shorter hours cutting wood for fuel. As the temperature in December dropped to 50 and 60 degrees below zero, the whole detachment, excepting the cook, hospital orderly and carpenter, were required to join the twice-weekly "wood fatigue." The buildings used wood for heating at a rate of one and one half to two cords per day. Like building lumber, it could only be obtained at enormous cost from those selling it. The wood was cut at a distance of one-quarter of a mile from the post and hauled to the fort by man-powered sleds. The hard work in the cold twilight of the north engendered a high expenditure of energy which in turn required more food. Constantine increased the daily ration of beans to offset the complaints of the men, suggesting to Ottawa that during periods of heavy physical labour required in the new northern posts, the daily ration be increased by one-half.

There was little else to indicate any dissatisfaction on the part of the men who policed the Yukon. Illness, injury and disciplinary problems were minimal. There were only a few minor crimes to attend to while civil matters, mainly debt collections, emphasized the need for civil courts, while the increased activity in real estate and legal matters pertaining thereto required the establishment of the necessary regulatory offices of the government. Gold production continued to show promise during the 1895-96 season, reaching a total of more than a quarter of a million dollars from the creeks in the area of the Fortymile River.[38]

The winter of 1895-96 was a very quiet eve to the Klondike discoveries of August 1896. The total population of the Yukon was small and scattered among numerous mining and Indian settlements. It seemed almost ironic that the new detachment had little to worry about other than establishing their physical presence and exerting their authority on behalf of the Canadian government in a relatively peaceful milieu. In the spring, the buildings were modified and repaired. The spring rains had pointed out a fault in the technique of piling earth on the slab roofs. Once saturated, the muddy water poured through. The deluge was so bad that oiled sheets and tarpaulins were strung over the beds to allow a measure of dry comfort at night. The problem was solved without re-roofing by covering the existing roof with another layer of boards to protect against the rain. The buildings were all re-chinked, provided with double floors and partially papered to eliminate drafts. A recreation hall was added to the facilities, much to the satisfaction of the men, and the stockade surrounding the buildings was completed.[39] Two years after Constantine was first dispatched to the Yukon by government, the North West Mounted Police were entrenched in the Yukon. Unknown to Ottawa, the decision had been a timely one.

Pre-Rush Concerns of the Police, 1895-97

The administration of the territory was complicated by its small population - there were only a few hundred men and several women scattered along a number of the tributaries of the Yukon River.[40] In his initial reconnaissance of the Yukon in 1894, Constantine recognized the need for mechanized transport to make the small force effective in the immense country. In 1895 he again emphasized the need for a small steam launch to replace the slow and inefficient method of poling small boats loaded with supplies against the river currents. All of the rivers in the area from the international boundary to the head of Teslin Lake were considered potentially gold-bearing and as such, had men working them and their tributary creeks. It was impossible to consider poling a heavily-laden boat to all of the scattered camps.[41] By August of 1896, the detachment had received two canoes to aid in their travels:

> Although highly spoken of by some eminent travellers and explorers I cannot altogether agree with them. They do very well with experienced men going down stream, but going up heavily loaded when they have to be tracked along rocky shores, they are in constant danger of being split and broken, even with great care.[42]

The often repeated solution to the less expensive and unsuitable canoes was a "river boat" which Ottawa had seemed not to appreciate. The steam launch which was finally promised for the 1897 season did not arrive that year. By then, one was no longer enough as two steamboats, one on the upper and one on the lower section of the Yukon River, were considered necessary for an efficient river service.[43] As a result of government inaction when the gold rush to the Klondike began, the police force lacked a dependable means of transport.

In 1895 the provisioning of Fort Constantine was of concern and to ensure adequate food supplies, the administration of the North West Mounted Police opted to purchase and send in the year's rations with the 20-man force. To spare additional and unwarranted expense, the contracts for supplies for August 1, 1896 to August 1, 1897 were tendered and awarded to the North American Transportation and Trading Company. An exceptionally short navigation season on the Yukon River prevented some of the supplies from reaching the post. Shortages were confined to flour and bacon and Constantine was forced to cut the flour by one-quarter pound per day. Fortunately, flour was obtainable in half the required quantity at a higher than contracted price, while the bacon was unobtainable.[44] To aggravate the situation, fresh meat in the form of caribou was unusually scarce, leaving the force in a precarious position, once again emphasizing the undependable nature of the St. Michael route into the Canadian Yukon district.

The Yukon River route had always been an uncertain commercial route. The shifting channels and sandbars, the extremely short season and its sinuous length weighed heavily against it. Constantine observed that the "richness" of the country above Fort Cudahy was not fully realized because of the inability to supply it adequately. During the first year at Fort Constantine, the police officer suggested the opening of a route into the Yukon from the southeast, connecting with the Yukon River system at the head of Teslin Lake. This, he reasoned, would eliminate the long and uncertain steamer passage on the lower Yukon.[45] The shorter distance from Teslin Lake to the Fortymile River was attractive, but overland access to the lake would later eliminate the route. The bane of development was the inaccessibility of the river valley or so it appeared in those initial years.

In 1895 there was little commercial incentive to improve or "open-up" any routes other than the St. Michael all-water route. The routes at the head of Lynn Canal were at best foot or pack trails and very difficult to traverse. Apart from the White Pass and Chilkoot Pass routes, a longer trail had been used by Jack Dalton who in the summer of 1896 had successfully driven 40 head of cattle over the trail to the mining camps on the Yukon. This "Chilkat trail" was considerably longer in comparison to the others, but lay through a relatively low mountain pass.[46] Notwithstanding their individual advantages, none of the trails from the south offered a suitable alternative to the St. Michael route for the movement of large amounts of heavy freight.

Ironically, the isolation complained of by all was about to end in a dramatic way. In August the discovery of coarse gold in the Klondike River valley created a stampede from the Fortymile and other areas to the new diggings. As discussed earlier, the gold strike was as rich as any of the oldtimers had hoped it could be. Before any amount of the Klondike gold arrived in the cities of the south in the summer of 1897, the news of the Klondike had leaked out of the remote Yukon valley and was common knowledge of adventurers and businessmen alike and a movement north was afoot.

The Rush and the North West Mounted Police

Fort Herchmer in the Klondike Gold Fields

The discoveries on the Klondike did not change the population of the Yukon during 1896 as much as it shifted it from scattered mining camps to the Klondike River valley, but by 1897 the gold had already drawn a much larger population to the Yukon. In his annual report to Commissioner Herchmer in Regina, Superintendent Charles Constantine observed a radical change in the population of the country:

> Instead of a few men working on well-known creeks, the discoveries of some of them dating back eight or ten years, the whole country is now covered with men travelling from creek to creek in search of gold. The population has jumped during the past few summer months from a few hundreds to at least 5,000. Dawson a year ago consisted of half a dozen small log cabins; to day it has a number of substantial buildings, hundreds of cabins, and a population of from 1,500 to 2,000. Both the trading companies have built fine stores and extensive warehouses.[47]

With the increase in population came "toughs, gamblers, fast women, and criminals of almost every type, from the petty thief to the murderer."[48] As a result, crime of every sort increased remarkably over that of the previous two years. Goods could no longer be left unguarded along the trails, but rather required an armed guard to prevent theft. Miners' cabins had been broken into and cleaned out while several larger robberies had occurred, notably the theft of $15,000-$20,000 at Tagish Lake in September 1897. The police also apprehended their first murderer, Edward Henderson, who shot and killed his partner. Constantine blamed most of the petty crime on the newcomers from the "Sound cities" (Puget Sound) whom he referred to as the "sweepings of the slums and the result of a general jail delivery."[49]

To facilitate the increased activity in the area of the new town of Dawson at the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon rivers, a new post was built and named in honour of Lawrence W. Herchmer, the Commissioner of the North West Mounted Police from 1889 to 1900. A reserve of 40 acres was set aside by the Department of the Interior and surveyed by William Ogilvie, Dominion Land Surveyor, at the junction of the two rivers. Nine buildings were erected and occupied by the end of the summer and the new post assumed a pre-eminent position.[50]

Reinforcements Join the Rush

Before Fort Herchmer was begun, Inspector W.H. Scarth and Assistant Commissioner J.H. McIllree, with 19 reinforcements for the Yukon detachment, left Regina for the West Coast. At Victoria they boarded the northbound *City of Topeka* with a few miners headed for the gold fields. At Juneau, after some difficulty, the police were crowded aboard one of the small gasoline-powered boats which carried trade to Dyea at the foot of the Chilkoot trail. On April 21, 1897 Inspector

Scarth, the Assistant Commissioner and their men camped at Healy and Wilson's trading post and made arrangements with the agent there to pack the supplies to the foot of the Taiya River Canyon. From that point, the party of policemen packed their own goods over the summit. At Sheep Camp, one of the party's many relay stations, Assistant Commissioner McIllree handed over the command of the detachment to Scarth before returning to the coast. Before he departed, McIllree observed that disagreeable camp on April 29, 1897:

> We had difficulty in getting sufficient space for our tents, and it was a very uncomfortable camp, and the whole place was filthy. Numbers of people had camped there during the past few weeks, the place was crowded then with both Whites and Indians, and it was a veritable cesspool. There were three saloons, whisky I believe of the vilest kind at $4.00 a bottle, a so-called boarding house and restaurant and a lady of easy virtue of a very forbidding countenance, who danced some filthy dances every evening, and passed the hat. There were about 50 or 60 dogs in the camp, and between them and drunken Indians, the nights were anything but peaceful.[51]

Unfortunately for the dismayed Captain McIllree, Sheep Camp and its pleasures were to be exchanged for a lengthy tour of duty at Skagway during the mad rush later in the fall of that year.

The police officers spread out along the trail during the next week while they back-packed and sledded their goods to the head of Lake Bennett. The snow was disappearing rapidly and to take advantage of the colder night temperatures, the two-men teams were up at 3 A.M., straining at the traces of their sleds loaded with 600 to 1000 pounds of supplies. Once on the lakes, the struggle was eased by the addition of masts and sails to the sleds. The head of Lake Bennett was crowded with men building boats; a sawmill run by a man named Rudolph supplied the insatiable demand for lumber at $70 per 1000 board feet while the finished boats sold for $55 each.[52] Scarth did not stop but continued down Lake Bennett, fighting a losing battle against the rising temperatures and the rapidly "rotting" ice. On May 8, after several nights of no frost, the heavily loaded sleds broke through the thin ice, causing a careful but hasty retreat to the east shore of the lake as the ice sagged under each step. A camp was established near the mouth of Wheaton River just north of the west arm of Lake Bennett in an excellent stand of timber. The work on the three scows was begun immediately under Scarth's strict camp routine. The call to reveille at 6:30 A.M., followed by eight and a half hours of work interspersed with regular meals, was a welcome change from the gruelling irregular trek over the Chilkoot. On May 24 their second scow completed and the third nearly so, the spirits of the men were high:

> In the evening the men built a huge bonfire, toasted her Majesty in a cup of hot tea, sang the national anthem and gave three cheers and a tiger for her Majesty.[53]

Five days later, the party left its cheerful and comfortable camp on Lake Bennett. The trip to Dawson was uneventful as they were able to anticipate every bend and feature of the river by using Dawson's map of the Yukon prepared almost ten years earlier. Arriving in Dawson on June 11, they camped before reporting to duty at Fort Constantine the next day. "The whole trip has been a delightful one and the scenery along this route is unsurpassed...We were almost sorry when the trip was over."[54] The strength of the Yukon detachment stood at 40 but more men were still needed to police the expanding population which poured over the passes.[55]

The Commissioner's office in Regina and the politicians' in Ottawa were becoming increasingly aware of the activity in the Yukon. In April the North American Transportation and Trading Company complained to Ottawa about the lack of police along the crowded Yukon River. Its representatives estimated that 3000-5000 people were inbound and expressed concern to stop the smuggling of liquor into the country.[56] The fears that large quantities of goods, including liquor, were entering Canadian territory through an uncontrolled frontier were verified by the reports of the Assistant Commissioner of the North West Mounted Police. He estimated that in May 1897 there were about 1400 people between the sea and the summit of the Chilkoot Pass, all packing a year's supply of food and equipment, ninety-five per cent of which had been purchased in either Seattle or Juneau. In addition, there were "peddlars" on the trail, moving outfits much larger in size, intending to sell the goods in the Yukon.[57] There was no mechanism for the collection of duties at the border and by the time they reached the settlements at Dawson and Forty Mile, the customs collector there would find collection of duties impossible as the men spread out into the gold fields. The only solution, according to McIllree, was the establishment of a customs post at the head of Lake Bennett as early as possible in 1897. Reports of a similar nature were received from the recently appointed Gold Commissioner during his journey inland through the Chilkoot Pass in May.[58] The growing population, the increased need for a government infrastructure and the general focussing of attention on the Klondike demanded action by the Canadian government. The law enforcement and revenue officers had no reliable means of communication with Ottawa, a situation becoming more and more intolerable.

On July 21, 1897 Frederick White, Comptroller of the North West Mounted Police, outlined the urgency of the situation as letters were taking up to five months to travel out of the Yukon.[59] A plan to alleviate the problem involved the police and a system of patrols along the route from Lynn Canal to Fort Cudahy. On July 27 a more detailed plan was set forth and approved.[60] It involved increasing the North West Mounted Police strength to 100 men of all ranks, and establishing a monthly mail service relying on the increased police manpower. Police stations were to be established 50 miles apart, from the Pacific to Cudahy, a distance of 650 miles.[61]

By August a general call for volunteers was once again broadcast to all detachments. Officers and men were chosen as before with regard to their physical suitability to duty in the north. Special attention was to be given during the "strict medical examination" to feet and teeth, a sobering reminder to the young constables not to expect anything but hard work and isolation in the Yukon.[62] Through August and September, 96 reinforcements departed in small groups, joining the rush to Dawson, but through the fall and winter of 1897, many of these men were spread out along the White Pass and Chilkoot trails, held up for various reasons by the poor condition of and the crowding on the trails.[63]

The new recruits were to be sent north through Skagway and the White Pass trail. Promoters had been busy at work describing its virtues, while many of the large eastern papers, their unwitting allies, had been just as active telling of the alleged advantages of the trail. The scene confronting the disembarking policemen was anything but encouraging as they joined the wave of humanity that spilled ashore only to grind to a complaining halt as it tried to force itself through the narrow valley to the White Pass.

Assistant Commissioner McIllree, having helped Inspector Scarth and his Yukon force replacements across the Chilkoot, found himself stationed at the foot of the steadily deteriorating trail. He was charged with the co-ordination of the march of reinforcements into the Yukon. On September 2, 1897 McIllree wrote of the steadily deteriorating conditions. The trail had just recently re-opened after a brief closure. The day traffic resumed, he estimated that 3000 horses were on the trail, moving agonizingly slowly:

> When one pony comes down, the whole line has to halt. Then it is almost impossible to pass in many places and if you get off the trail you may have to wait for the space of an hour. I don't know when it is going to end...People are struggling on without the slightest chance of getting over, but they will not give up, and block the road.[64]

With evident frustration, McIllree reported the dislocation of his right ankle which put him on his back, unable to do much but think of the lack of progress. Inspector Harper, who had left Regina on August 7 with a group of 20 men, was within three miles of the summit of the White Pass but his forward movement had been slowed. A small advance party had crossed the mountains and were building the boats necessary to carry Harper's force to Dawson. Although the details of Harper's struggle over the pass are unclear, he did manage to leave Lake Bennett on September 23 with inadequate provisions, in part due to the difficulty of moving over the White Pass trail.[65] His subsequent arrival in Dawson on October 10 provoked Constantine to complain about the lack of food carried by the reinforcements. The existing food shortage was not only aggravated by the arrival of more men but by the fact that Harper's poorly provisioned party had been forced to borrow food during their trip; this had to be repaid out of the meager store at Fort Herchmer.[66]

While Harper struggled to the summit and beyond, other contingents of the Yukon detachment continued to assemble at Skagway. These later groups of men were destined to man the outposts at Tagish Lake, on the desolate and storm-torn summits and the numerous posts along the water route. A semblance of order was beginning to develop as red-coated policemen moved to assert Canadian authority in the Yukon.

Fort Sifton on the Tagish River

Inspector D'Arcy E. Strickland arrived in Skagway in late August aboard the Canadian Pacific steamer *Danube*. He brought a party of five men and a large quantity of supplies destined to be sent inland for the Yukon detachment. Two weeks were spent in Skagway aiding Assistant Commissioner McIllree before Strickland, with a party of men and six months' rations, was dispatched to Dyea as the White Pass trail was thought to be impassable. On September 14 Strickland made arrangements with "Chief Isaac" of the Chilkoot Indians to pack the rations through the Pass to the head of Lake Lindeman at the exorbitant rate of 38¢ per pound. The rate was non-negotiable. In fact, Strickland had to cajole and finally threaten the Indian with the retribution of the Canadian government to force him to honour the verbal contract in the face of higher bids. Conditions on the White Pass had increased the demand for packers on the Chilkoot trail.[67]

Once on the trail, the party was forced to rebuild several bridges that had been washed out by the unusually heavy fall rains and the flooding Taiya River. The bridge at the foot of the Taiya Canyon was one they had to rebuild. The task took some time, necessitating an overnight camp. At breakfast the following morning at 6:30, a wall of water 15 feet in height sent the policemen and their Indian packers scrambling for their lives as it descended on the camp. The flash flood, which found its source in the collapse of a glacial ice-dammed lake above Sheep Camp, washed through that camp, drowning one man and submerging tons of irreplacable supplies. Fortunately, Strickland's supply tent was well-pitched and thus suffered only a thorough soaking. The Indians refused to pack the heavier, wet loads which caused a delay of four days while the packs dried out. Eleven days out of Dyea, Strickland was at the head of Lake Lindeman where he hired a ferry to transfer the supplies to the North West Mounted Police camp at Lake Bennett.[68]

The Bennett camp had been established at the crowded lake head by Inspector Harper in advance of his crossing to ensure that the necessary boats would be constructed and ready for his expedition to Dawson. Upon his departure, Harper left a party of policemen under Sergeant Haslett to build boats for Strickland's group which was then on the Chilkoot. The detachment at Lake Bennett, although constantly changing in size and personnel, was a more or less permanent station from the fall of 1897 and through the rush, acting also as a relay station for the small contingents of the Mounted Police coming over the passes on their way inland.

Sergeant Haslett had Strickland's boats when he arrived but bad weather on the lake delayed his departure until the first of October. When the 13 men and their officers finally left Lake Bennett, their progress was extremely slow in the unwieldy and overloaded boats. It took five days to cover the 50 miles to the proposed site of the new post on Tagish River. Mr. John Godson, the collector of customs, and his four assistants were already on location collecting Canadian revenues. It was, in fact, Mr. Godson and his assistants who had arrested the alleged murderer Edward Henderson on Marsh Lake, holding him until Inspector Harper arrived to take him to Fort Constantine.[69]

The site of the new post was chosen by Inspector Strickland about two miles from the Indian burial ground called "Tagish Houses." The site, near the river and in heavy timber, commanded a view of all traffic going down river from the mountain passes and Lake Bennett. Even those few individuals who chose to reach the Yukon River from the White Pass via Taku Arm of Tagish Lake would have to pass through Tagish River. Tagish River would funnel all of the stampeders from the Lynn Canal routes into the Yukon River.[70]

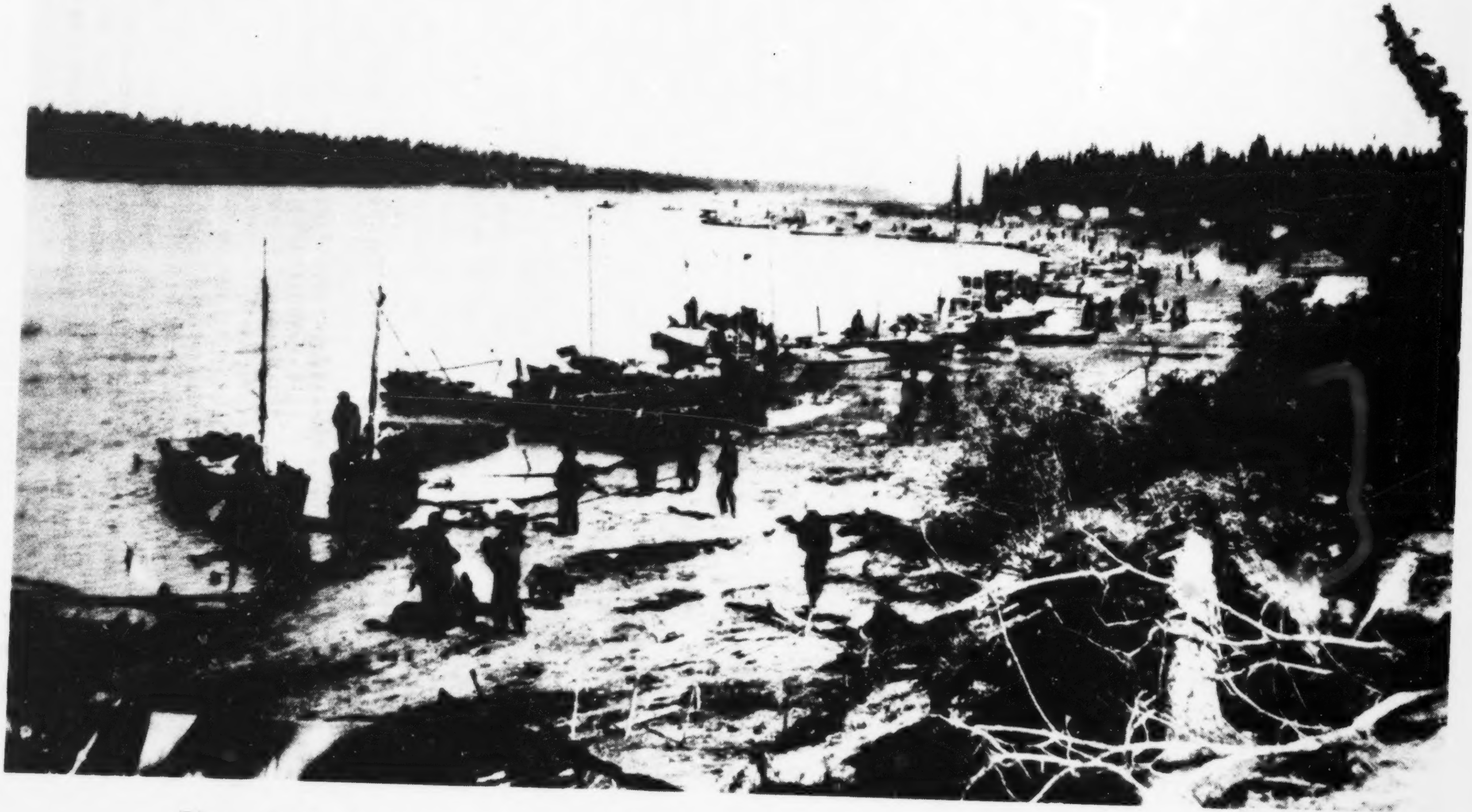

Figure 4. Tagish Post customs house on the Tagish River ca. 1898. (Public Archives Canada.)

The small force lost no time in erecting the new post. On October 6 the site was chosen and cleared of vegetation; by the end of October, the barracks were up, measuring 70 by 22 feet. The building was divided into three rooms: the kitchen, 10 by 22 feet; the mess hall, 20 by 22 feet; and the sleeping quarters, 40 by 22 feet, making it a general purpose building, which reflected the shortage of time and manpower.[71] The building stood "ten logs high," roofed with poles and covered with eight inches of earth. The walls inside and out were plastered with mud to ensure warmth and freedom from drafts. Other buildings were completed before winter developed in earnest, while the storehouse was constructed, with great difficulty, during the winter. The buildings were all arranged around an open square that served as a parade ground for the small detachment. No draft animals and few tools were available to handle the green timber, but Strickland managed to purchase a number of small tools at inflated prices, from the steady stream of passersby. On November 15 the men were able to move out of their tents into the log buildings.[72]

The new post was named Fort Sifton, a compliment they hoped would not be lost on Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior, during his brief visit there on October 13, 1897. The Honourable Minister accompanied the Commissioner, J.M. Walsh, and the administrative officers for the new Provisional District of the Yukon. Clifford Sifton had chosen the men as an "emergency staff" to deal boldly with the extraordinary developments at Dawson and in the Klondike gold fields.[73] Constantine's pleas for more government control over the gold mining had finally been answered. The Commissioner's staff included a Supreme Court justice, a mines inspector, William Ogilvie as the Dominion Land Surveyor, and others.[74]

Sifton's unusual appearance at the remote post on the Tagish River was an attempt on his part to gain understanding of the routes into the Yukon with a view to the establishment of an all-Canadian alternative to the trails that existed through American territory. His personal experience with the Chilkoot trail and the White Pass trail during his trip to Fort Sifton, for he had gone in on the former and out on the latter, convinced him that both trails had disadvantages serious enough to make the discovery and development of a wholly Canadian route essential.[75] Even while Sifton inspected the Chilkoot and White Passes, other expeditions sought to find the all-Canadian alternative. A group of North West Mounted Police led by Inspector J.D. Moodie struggled northwestward from Edmonton, and Charles Jennings and Arthur St. Cyr, engineer and surveyor, respectively, explored the possibilities of the Stikine River as the route into the interior via Teslin Lake.[76] Nonetheless, the most practical route for the impatient miners not encumbered by the concerns of politicians and merchants was by way of the mountain passes and they continued to pour over the mountains while Sifton returned to Ottawa.

Starvation in the Yukon

When Clifford Sifton left Fort Sifton, or Tagish Post as it was later to be known among the thousands of stampeders, Commissioner Walsh went out over the White Pass to Skagway with him and did not return until November 4. Walsh had planned to reach Dawson before the river froze, but due to his late start, he was forced to winter near the mouth of the Big Salmon River some distance below Lake Laberge. The termination of the trip was not only disappointing, but touched with tragedy as pack ice had caught and overturned one of the boats, causing the death of one member of the expedition. At that point, near the middle of November, the government administrators were spread out along the river. Major Walsh, Captain Bliss the accountant, Walsh's private secretary Dufferin Pattullo and Walsh's son Philip were at Big Salmon with a cook and two Indians, while Inspector Starner of the North West Mounted Police was in winter camp at Little Salmon River farther north on the Yukon River with Judge McGuire, F.C. Wade the Crown Prosecutor and several others. J.D. McGregor, the Mines Inspector, was somewhere between Walsh's camp and Bennett, as were a complement of policemen.[77]

The skeleton network of police observation posts had been established, largely under orders from Commissioner Walsh as he travelled from the head of Lake Bennett to the confluence of the Big Salmon and Yukon rivers. At Lake Bennett, a small detachment occupied a log cabin 30 by 16 feet which served as quarters as well as a storage depot for the constant stream of government supplies coming over the passes. About 50 miles farther down the lake chain, Fort Sifton or Tagish Post consisted of two large log buildings containing police quarters and a customs post. There were two constables stationed at the White Horse Rapids in a substantial, well-provisioned log post.[78] Although no official police post existed at the head of Lake Laberge, arrangements had been made with a resident there to provide accommodation and lodging for mail carriers and government personnel. Stations also were established at the foot of Lake Laberge and at the mouth of the Hootalinqua or Teslin River, completing a chain of communication inland from the coast. In spring, it would be extended to Dawson.[79]

While Walsh waited anxiously on the shores of the frozen Yukon River devising plans for the administration of the developing territory, the North West Mounted Police continued to arrive at Skagway with tons of supplies to ensure their survival in the gold-mining community of the Yukon. At the beginning of 1897, 19 policemen maintained law and order in the Yukon while stationed on the Fortymile River. In November the detachment's strength numbered 96, spread out along the Yukon River to Fort Constantine. Each month thereafter the force continued to grow. In December it numbered 131, while in January 1898 the strength was 168, growing to 239 by April 1898 with a proposed increase to 250 men. The relative importance of the Yukon to the Dominion was apparent in that while in April 1898 the total strength of the force was to be decreased to 750 men in the combined Yukon and Northwest Territories, the Yukon detachment was to be increased from 239 to 250 while detachments in the Northwest Territories would be decreased from 579 to 500 men. The Yukon detachment, in 1898, was to be spread out along the routes from the summits of the White and Chilkoot passes, through the headwaters of the Yukon River, and on down the river itself to Dawson and the International boundary at the old Fort Constantine in the Fortymile River area. The posts or stations were established at intervals averaging less than 30 miles across the entire district, leaving little doubt in the minds of the largely alien population that the Yukon valley was Canadian territory. Secondarily, these facilities acted as a communication line from the seat of Yukon government at Dawson to Ottawa on the "outside," while providing a way in which to police the great movement of people from the coast to the gold fields during the spring of 1898.[80]

The establishment of Canadian sovereignty by the deployment of a large force of North West Mounted Police thereby provided a convenient vehicle for the emplacement of a bureaucratic structure. In fact, the police acted as bureaucratic "jacks-of-all-trades." Depending on the specific location, they collected customs, issued placer and quartz mining certificates, collected timber fees and duties, acted as mining inspectors and general timber agents for the Department of the Interior, carried mail to and from Dawson, and on occasion, piloted miners' boats through the White Horse Rapids and provided relief to the destitute. In fact, at one time or another during the rush and its aftermath, the police performed most of the governmental duties in the absence of a civilian civil service for all three levels of government. Complaints were loud and frequent as these duties were added to the policeman's regular law enforcement duties with little or no extra pay. Often the supplementary wages were merely a token or as in the case of the collection of customs and timber duties, an incentive, a percentage of collection, for hard work.[81]

The lot of the policeman was not unlike that of the miner in that the steadily increasing force needed an enormous amount of food and equipment, all of which had to go over the mountain passes, to keep it active. At Dawson, Inspector Constantine had complained of lack of supplies early in 1897 as the annual arrival of river steamers was delayed by a late spring and then by armed miners at Circle City in Alaska who forced the unloading of the precious cargoes of food before they could reach Dawson. As the situation worsened, he warned of starvation in the gold fields as more and more people arrived and food supplies grew short. In the face of the spectre of starvation, hundreds fled as news spread through Dawson that no steamers and no food would reach the gold fields until the spring of 1898.[82]

Meanwhile, the chief administrator of the Yukon, camped at Big Salmon during the "winter of starvation," had time to ponder the problems of orderly development of the new territory. Ironically, circumstances had dictated that food was the key to his own survival that winter. Two boats carrying 1000 pounds of supplies each had been lost in the river ice while a further 500 pounds of supplies had been thrown overboard to save a third boat. In effect, almost half of the party's provisions were lost and what remained would not sustain the scattered party until the spring. Walsh immediately juggled the members of his party, sending some back to Tagish Post. Fortunately, he was able to replace the lost supplies and add to his stores with purchases from other groups who had abandoned the trek and were returning to the coast. The surplus supplies, amounting to more than 7000 pounds of food, allowed the implementation of a plan to relieve the many expected cases of distress and destitution among those who left Dawson for the coast via the upper Yukon.[83] Many cases of relief on the trail required Walsh to exchange commodities as some of the travellers had a shortage of a vital staple. There were a number of cases of absolute destitution which left the Major no alternative but to supply the fleeing travellers with enough food from his stores to get them to the coast safely.[84] Although the trip could then be made without fear of starvation, it was a terrible ordeal, with temperatures reaching 50 degrees below zero on unbroken trail over the sharp ridges of river ice. For the most part, the people travelled "light" to escape the country which had only recently held the key to their future hopes.

The experience on the trail during the winter convinced Commissioner Walsh, as others had been convinced before him, that the key to the systematic development of the country lay in the evolution of a reliable network of supply. It would be necessary to develop a route that was more suitable to the year-round movement of large quantities of supplies. Walsh favoured a route from the coast via the Teslin Lake and the Hootalinqua (Teslin) River system, a route that began in a well-sheltered anchorage and was free of mountain passes for its entire distance. Although he agreed that the Chilkoot and White Pass trails could be improved, thus lowering the prohibitive freight rates, that alone would not overcome the disadvantages of the water route linking the mountain passes to Dawson. Apart from the establishment of a permanent supply route, a change was necessary in the policy of supplying government officials and the police who were then provisioned on a "hand-to-mouth policy which courted disaster at every turn of events." The isolated posts should be treated as such and supplied with at least a one year surplus of provisions to forestall any crisis. Similar surpluses were suggested by Walsh for the well-being of the general public, to be housed in a system of government depots about the country to be drawn upon in time of shortage.[85] The plans and recommendations were dependent on the continued growth of the Yukon, but a decrease in population and subsequent development after the gold rush made the measure unnecessary.

Impatient for immediate action and determined that the food shortages of the winter of 1897-98 should not reoccur the following winter, Walsh devised a plan. As early as January 4, 1898, he ordered Inspector Z.T. Wood, who was in charge of the upper Yukon detachment, to inform anyone at Dyea and Skagway that without a one-year supply of solid food, they would be prevented from entering Yukon territory.[86] Allowing a ration of three pounds of food per day, each miner's outfit would need to contain over 1000 pounds of food, which together with auxiliary equipment made up the legendary ton of supplies to be packed over the Chilkoot or White passes. Inspector Strickland at Tagish Post was instructed not to allow any person to pass unless he had the requisite supply. Many miners had already taken the advice prevalent in the contemporary literature and supplied themselves for a year, so it is impossible to measure the effect of the order. Nonetheless, its strict enforcement ensured food supplies would reach Dawson as early as possible in the spring of 1898. Miners and supplies reached Dawson from the south three weeks before the steamers loaded with food reached it from the north.[87] The government supplies that had been moved across the passes employing most of the North West Mounted Police and their horse and dog trains were cached at the police post at the foot of Lake Labarge. On May 17, 1898 the first of these government supplies reached Dawson, a scant two days before the rations at Fort Herchmer were exhausted.[88] The situation had been serious enough to induce the United States government to organize an abortive relief mission on behalf of its starving citizens in Dawson, but no one starved in Dawson during the winter.[89]

Outposts on a Disputed Border

Superintendent Perry from Vancouver arrived in Skagway on February 10 and took over direct command of the detachment, unknown to Inspector Wood who was supervising the movement of supplies to Lake Laberge under the orders of Commissioner Walsh.[90] The bulk of the much-needed supplies had been moved over the snow-covered White Pass trail with horse- and dog-sled trains and over the ice to the foot of Lake Laberge in the period from December to January. During Wood's absence, Perry cancelled Walsh's orders concerning the movement of food and ordered the transport detail to the summits of the Chilkoot and White passes in a defiant move ordered by Ottawa to delineate and secure the boundary between Alaska and British Columbia.

Upon his return to the Yukon from a leave of absence during January, Inspector Strickland was sent to the summit of the White Pass to establish a port of entry on February 9, 1898.[91] At the same time, Inspector Belcher was ordered to establish a similar facility at the summit of the Chilkoot Pass.[92] The rush for gold had taken on gigantic proportions as men moved their provisions to the heads of Lindeman and Bennett. Nearly 30,000 men, women and children were on their way to the lakes and would start for Dawson when the waterway was free of ice. As a result, nearly 30,000 tons of goods, much of which had been purchased in American territory, were subject to Canadian customs duties.

Strickland and his force of 20 men arrived on the summit of the White Pass on February 13 and pitched their canvas tents on the ice of Summit Lake. The task of erecting a building on the barren treeless summit was not easy. The nearest wood lay 12 miles away, yet at reveille of the 27th, the Union Jack was hoisted over the newest Canadian outpost. For ten of the 14 days, a blizzard had raged without letup, but the policemen, proving the superior qualities for which they had been chosen and the urgency of their task, began to collect customs from the steady stream of miners who crossed the designated International boundary.[93]

Meanwhile, Inspector R. Belcher, with Corporal Pringle and Constable Boyd, arrived in Dyea where lumber for the proposed customs post on the Chilkoot summit was purchased. Getting the lumber to Sheep Camp was one matter, but having it and the large quantities of supplies moved to the summit on the cable tramway required the judicious expenditure of government funds to "grease the packers' palms a little" to avoid any possible delays.[94] On February 11 the three policemen pitched what was probably the first tent in the narrow cleft of the Chilkoot Pass. The following day, an appropriate site was cleared and levelled on the snow and the 12 by 12 foot cabin was erected. The walls were constructed of one inch thick green wood planking while the roof was made of a canvas tarpaulin stretched tightly across the top of the large square plank box. The green planking of the walls soon shrank, leaving large cracks through which the incessant wind drove the finely powdered snow. Once inside, the shower of snow melted, soaking clothing, beddings and papers. Subjected to the constant dampness, the contents of the cabin mildewed, adding an all-pervading aura of mold to the discomforts to be endured by the occupants. Inspector Belcher, who occupied the building with his assistant through the winter, complained that once wet, the blankets never were given a chance to dry until

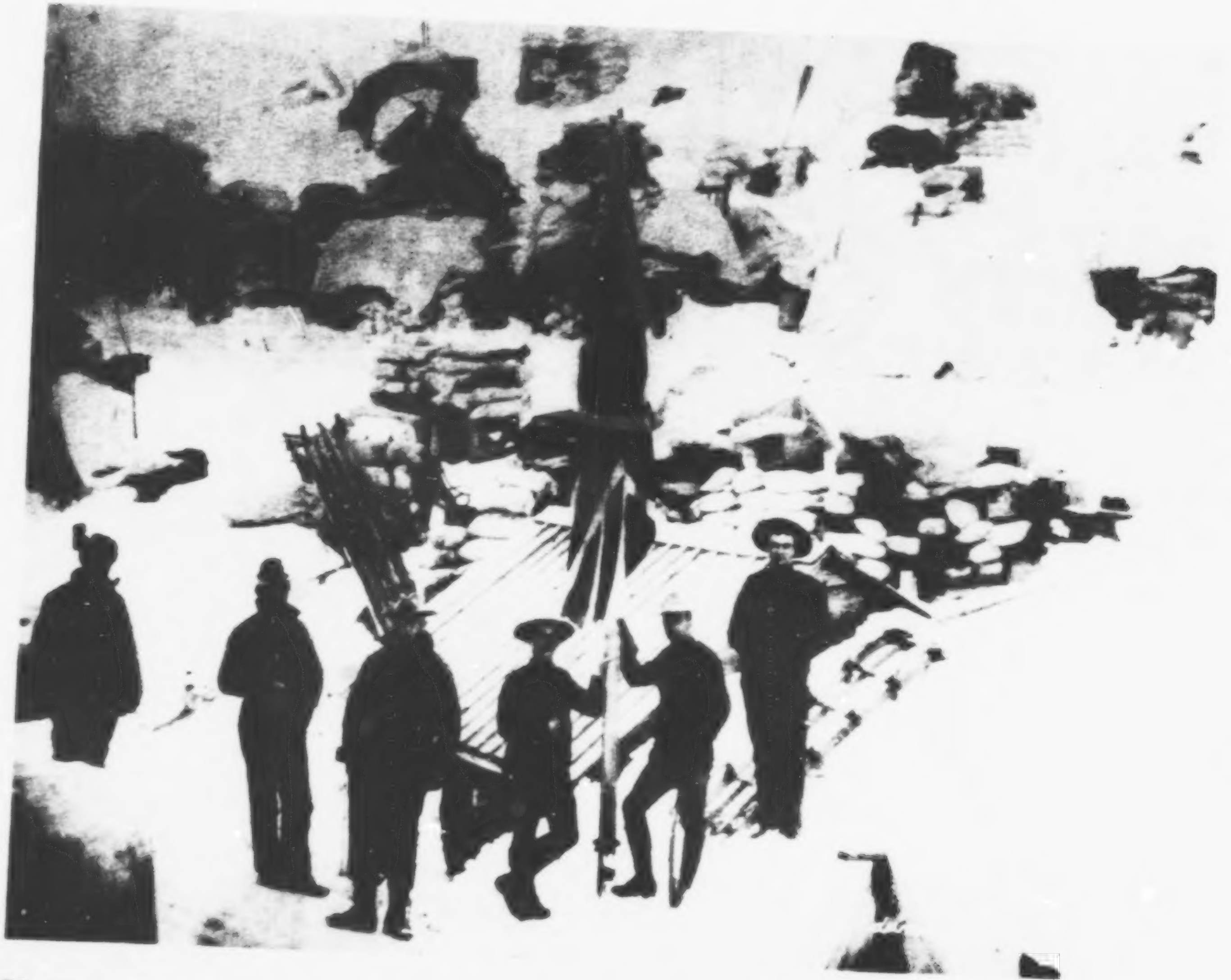

Figure 5. North West Mounted Police post on the summit of the Chilkoot Pass ca. 1898. (Vancouver Public Library.)

spring, forcing them to sleep in sodden beds for the whole of the winter.[95]

Reinforcements arrived on February 14 to complete the strength of the Chilkoot guard. The 15 additional men with 2 horses established a camp below the summit on the ice of Crater Lake. Service on the Chilkoot was fraught with tremendous hardship. On February 18, as a prolonged blizzard was beginning, water on the ice of Crater Lake began to rise, reaching a depth of six inches before the morning. To keep their beds above the water, the men dragged the supply sleds into the tents and slept on them, only inches above the icy liquid. It was no wonder that the men complained of colds and kidney troubles. The same storm that had impeded Inspector Strickland's progress on the White Pass finally forced the police camp off the lake as several tents were blown down and the tent in which the men were quartered was barely saved by the policemen who anchored the supporting poles with their own weight. When the blizzard abated slightly on the 21st, the tents were moved to a nearby knoll and the horses were sent back to the post at Bennett as it was impossible to keep them at the summit.[96] The situation was improved and although the cold and the damp continued, the vigilant policemen no longer had to wade through a shallow sea to their meals and beds. Notwithstanding the hardship and discomfort, the collection of Canadian customs duties was begun on February 26 on the Chilkoot Pass.

The day of February 26 dawned bright and quiet after the ten-day blizzard. Miners who had waited out the storm at Sheep Camp appeared with their packs only to find they were now requested to pay their customs duties at the summit. Belcher viewed their objections contemptuously:

> This caused great indignation among a certain class at Sheep Camp, Dyea, etc., and a number of meetings were held and some very loud talk indulged in at them, but as is usual with this class, most of the meetings ended in talk. One gentleman, who wished to distinguish himself, wanted volunteers to the number of one thousand to march up and turn us off; but as he did not feel inclined to take the responsibility of leading this gallant band the affair fell through.[97]

The collection of customs duties was hampered continually by bad weather and a lack of facilities. Every morning, the frost that had accumulated on the canvas ceiling of the small cabin melted when the stove was fired and the resultant rain continued until noon, soaking everything. The cold and wind-blown snow made it virtually impossible to check the tons of supplies with any degree of thoroughness. Such simple items as paper were scarce in this extreme extension of Canada's revenue system and what little existed mildewed after a short time on the summit. Similar conditions prevailed on the White Pass summit where the overworked Inspector Strickland developed a severe case of bronchitis but struggled along loyally until he could be relieved and sent back to Tagish Post to recover.[98] The monumental effort required by the men who occupied the frontier posts was quietly acknowledged by their superiors who considered the duty a matter of national sovereignty rather than human endurance.

The establishment of the North West Mounted Police on the summits of the Chilkoot and White passes completed a chain of posts through the

Canadian portion of the gold rush trail. Placement of the customs post was in accordance with Ottawa's interpretation of the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1825. The treaty drew the boundary between the Northwest Territories and the Alaskan "panhandle" along the summit of the coastal range of mountains, provided said summit was found within ten marine leagues (about 30 miles) of the coast; otherwise the boundary was to parallel the windings of coast, never exceeding the specified distance of ten marine leagues from the coast. Ottawa's contention was that a continuous mountain chain did exist, but if the alternative boundary was drawn, it should be the specified distance from the mouths of the inlets, while the Americans contended that the line should be drawn ten marine leagues from the head of the inlets. The latter interpretation would prevent Canadian access to the Yukon via an ocean port. North of Dyea and Sakgway, the existence of the mountain range was an all too painful reality, yet the American claim put the boundary not on the summit but about four miles north of the head of Lake Bennett. In a bold decisive move, Sifton ordered Superintendent Perry north to the mountain passes for reasons he explained later:

> The difficulty was that the offices of the United States government asserted their jurisdiction down to and including the lower half of Lake Bennett, and a military force of the United States army was already detailed to go to Skagway. This force was gathered at Portland, and in another ten days would have been in possession of the territory down to Lake Bennett, and it would have taken twenty years of negotiating to get them out, in fact I doubt if we would ever have got them out. To prevent the loss of this territory I sent secret orders to Major Perry to send up Steele and forty more men, and plant out posts in the Passes just under the Summit, and had them there with a supply of provisions before the other party knew what we were doing. It is a case of possession being ten points in the law, and we intend to hold possession. The United States authorities have now been communicated with through diplomatic channels, and we intend to hold the territory if we possibly can.[99]

Although the move proved effective in the provisional acceptance of the boundary line by the United States in 1899, the occupation of the summits initiated a great rumble of disapproval from the hordes of American goldseekers using the trails. The crowds at Skagway, Dyea and Sheep Camp were mostly Americans who did not object so much to the imposition of Canadian customs duties as to the location of the demand for the inevitable levy. It looked to them like an extension of foreign authority into American territory. Although the miners were particularly dissatisfied about the imposition of stumpage fees on the timber required for the construction of boats and shelter at the head of Lakes Lindeman and Bennett, their indignation received only vocal expression. The American government officials in southeast Alsaka did not move to support these objections to the location of the Canadian posts. Throughout the protracted negotiations concerning the placement of the boundary, the Americans insisted on an unbroken strip of land extending north from Dixon's Entrance to the Alaskan mainland.[100] The establishment of the Canadian outposts on the summits of the passes did not seriously compromise the American interpretation of the

Anglo-Russian treaty of 1825. The situation remained tense, with minor disagreements between American miners and pedlars on one hand and the Canadian customs officials on the other. Senior authorities on both sides of the disputed boundary acted with judicious restraint and the potential for a nasty border incident was avoided.

The majority of the 30,000 people on the Chilkoot and White Pass trails were neither concerned with the location of the border nor the stand taken by the governments involved. Their prime concern lay more than 650 miles inland from the coastal summits and more immediately with the long portage to the headwaters of the Yukon River. This mass of gold-obsessed humanity and the geographic circumstances of the route provided the opportunity for tremendous profit, and as a direct consequence, a commercial and transportation infrastructure was germinated and nurtured during the early part of 1898.

THE GOLD RUSH, 1898-99

The Boom at the Foot of the Trail

The means for the ultimate aggrandizement of the Chilkoot Pass took shape in the events of the winter and early spring of 1898. Crowds that had flooded ashore at Dyea and Skagway in the fall of 1897 now seemed a mere trickle compared to the thousands of arrivals at the base of the gold-rush trails the following spring. Like their unwitting, anxious yet hopeful counterparts, the argonauts of 1898 wandered bewildered into the booming seaports of Skagway and Dyea, their former confidence in a golden destiny temporarily shaken. The stunned astonishment disappeared as promoters and entrepreneurs of all descriptions forced the reality of the situation upon them. Now well worn, the way to the gold fields held only the mystery of each adventurer's strength and endurance.

Dyea had sprung from the tidal flats at the mouth of the Taiya River, its short-lived "golden age" beginning in the fall of 1897. Before the rush, the town consisted of a small Indian village and a lone trading post run by an agent of the trading company of Healy and Wilson. Swelled by goldseekers who arrived after the onslaught of the Yukon winter, the population of Dyea grew to more than 1200 by December 1897. The boomtown had been laid out in lots occupied by about 100 tents while the business district contained a hotel, store and restaurant.

A building boom followed on the heels of the initial rush. Services were required by the growing population and the mass of transient men forever flowing northward through the town. Through the winter and early spring, building went on almost non-stop all hours of the day. On January 12, 1898 the Dyea *Trail*, in its first edition, boasted of the feverish activity that had engulfed the new town.[1] The sounds of "carpentering" were heard at all hours with even Sunday as busy as any other day. Thousands of people were expected to arrive in the early spring and investors bent to the task of erecting hotels to feed and shelter the rush, while buildings were built to house everything from attorneys to dry goods and groceries. The creation of streets of false-fronted frame buildings fostered an insatiable demand for lumber. In January the shortage was temporarily ended with the arrival of one and one-half million board feet of lumber, most of which was brought by the ship *Colorado*, with more ships dumping more lumber on the beaches to be hauled, by teamsters working around the clock, to the many building sites in the frantic town of Dyea.[2] The enthusiastic *Trail* continued to announce the almost daily establishment of new businesses. Amidst the bustle of the building boom late in February, the burgeoning town gathered to draft a charter and elect a civic government, which by late spring presided over a town of 3500-4000 people. Where less than a year ago a single building and huddle of Indian shelters had stood on the muddy beach, now false-fronted hotels, stores, cafes, saloons, gambling houses and a myriad of other buildings including a three-storey opera house proudly announced the results of the gold-rush boom.[3] The gold rush had given birth to this rowdy urban pretense at the foot of the Chilkoot Pass, as it had spawned a similar community at the foot of the White Pass, the town of Skagway, whose growth was equally as spectacular. Both towns fought for the patronage of the Yukon-bound traffic.

An indication of the developing competition between the investors and supporters of Skagway and Dyea surfaced with the attempts to improve the cargo-handling facilities. The nature of the harbour in Dyea's Taiya Inlet required an unusually long and costly wharf, while Skagway already had several, due largely to the efforts of Captain William Moore. The lack of such a wharf required all Chilkoot-bound goods be lightered ashore in small boats and the completion of the first wharf on February 10, 1898 raised a defiant cheer from the Dyea supporters. They claimed that the new structure, linked to the town by three miles of wagon roads, allowed ships to disgorge their cargo directly into wagons, putting the two towns on an equal footing. Contrary to the hopes of the boosters of Dyea, however, the Dyea Klondike Transportation Company wharf never gained popularity with the disembarking miners, mainly because of the difficulty of the wagon road from the wharf to Dyea. Consequently, a second wharf was begun shortly afterward. Using the new facility, which extended from tidewater in front of Dyea out into Taiya Inlet, ships would be able to dock in 60 feet of water. Work on the new wharf was not completed until May 1898, and even though the majority of "rushers" were on the river route to the north, it did give Dyea deepwater status, allowing the enormous tonnages of goods handled by the Chilkoot tramways to be unloaded more efficiently.[4]

While Dyea had been designated as the port of entry to southeastern Alaska, as well as the residence of the local governmental authority in the summer of 1897, Skagway's outstripped that of Dyea. The impassability of the White Pass trail in the fall of 1897 gave the town an instant population of 3000 disgruntled men and women in September 1897. Within a few weeks of the beginning of the rush, almost all of the ships were unloading at Skagway, but the traffic had come to a standstill and men and freight piled up in the boom town.[5] A town of white tents literally mushroomed out of the rain-soaked flats at the mouth of the Skagway River. Hotels, restaurants and the inevitable saloons and gambling dens made up most of the 40 wooden buildings that occupied the centre of Skagway. The hastily constructed business establishments provided lodging at $1.00 per night and meals for 75¢ each to the transient population. The onslaught of winter and its heavy snows and freezing temperatures solidified the mud and covered the much-improved trail with a blanket of packed snow over which the never-ending stream of men dragged their supplies to Lake Bennett.

Skagway's notorious reputation began with the birth of the town. Born of the disregard for the rightful claims of Captain William Moore for his homestead upon which the town was established, lawlessness became the tradition. The situation was compounded by the absence of any effective American law-enforcement agency.

Alexander Macdonald, a 19th-century gentleman adventurer, was drawn to the excitement of the Klondike gold rush as he had been drawn to other curious places in the world. Landing at Skagway in the late autumn of 1897, he compared the community to other towns "beyond the outposts of civilization":

> ...the most outrageously lawless quarter I ever struck was Skagway. It seemed as if the scum of the earth had hastened here to fleece and rob, or...to murder. There was no law whatever; might was right, the dead shot only was immune to danger.[6]

By mid-winter the town was firmly under the control of Jefferson Randolph Smith, a wandering opportunist who had made his living operating various confidence schemes through the frontier towns of the American West. Jefferson Smith, called "Soapy Smith" for one of his better-known swindles in which he sold bars of soap wrapped in dollar bills, controlled the "lawless element" in Skagway. He had worked out a systematic method of robbing the hapless men on their way to the Klondike. Schemes ranging from blatant armed robbery to shell games and sophisticated swindles were performed in Skagway, Dyea and along both the mountain trails to the summits.[7] The flagrant disregard for the law, while not openly condoned, was in no way impeded by the American law-enforcement system headed by Commissioner Judge John U. Smith who was busily engaged in the questionable use of his own powers for personal gain.[8]

The infamous reign of Soapy Smith, like the whole of the gold-rush phenomenon, was short-lived. Outrage upon outrage was heaped upon the lawful citizenry of Skagway, who finally reached their limit of tolerance. Action was finally triggered by the robbery of J.D Stewart, an "outbound" gold miner who lost a bag containing $2000 in gold dust and nuggets on July 8, 1898 in Soapy Smith's Parlor. The formation of a vigilante committee followed Stewart's complaints. A clumsy and confused confrontation between Soapy Smith and Frank Reid, the leader of the committee, resulted in the death of both men. Smith died during the exchange of gunshots while Reid survived, only to die a few days later. The outlaw's associates, now leaderless, were thrown into chaos and the illicit organization soon disappeared from Skagway.[9]

The legendary Colonel Samuel B. Steele arrived in Skagway on February 14, 1898 from his former post on the Prairies at the peak of Soapy Smith's lawless career.[10] Skagway was virtually run by the 150 "ruffians" that made up the outlaw's gang:

> Robbery and murder were daily occurrences; many people came there with money, and next morning had not enough to get a meal, having been robbed or cheated out of their last cent. Shots were exchanged on the streets in broad daylight, and enraged Klondykers pursued the scoundrels of Soapy Smith's gang to get even with them. At night the crash of bands, shouts of 'Murder!', cries for help mingled with the cracked voices of the singers in the variety halls...[11]

On a Sunday morning following his arrival in the rowdy boom-town, Steele and a fellow officer were rudely awakened from their sleep on the floor of the North West Mounted Police headquarters in Skagway by a fusillade of gun fire. Several of the bullets passed through the thin boards of the building but the occurrence was by then commonplace and elicited hardly more than a passing notice. Law enforcement of the town was non-existent. Although a United States deputy marshall had been appointed to maintain law and order, no protection was expected from him.[12]

Steele had been ordered north to take command of the police force on the passes and the posts on the Upper Yukon south of Selkirk, as well as the posts in northern British Columbia. His headquarters were to be established at Bennett, but after several trips to the pass summits through the most severe weather, he contracted a serious case of bronchitis which delayed his trip to Bennett until March 27, 1897. The trails, he noted, were crowded with men packing their supplies to the lakes in Canada and their camps at Skagway, Dyea and Sheep Camp and other places were all similar in the consistent lack of law and order, the free and unrestricted use of the "gun" as well as the ever-present gambler and "booster" who collaborated to entice the unwary goldseeker into a game of chance which he invariably lost. Once at the summit, the miner came under the protection of the North West Mounted Police:

> The 'gun', the slang name for a revolver or pistol of any description, was put in the sack or valise, and everyone went about his business with as strong a sense of security as if he were in the most law-abiding part of the globe.[13]

Although Steele's view of the sudden "difference in the demeanour" of people as they passed under the Union Jack could not be expected to be completely free of bias, it was in fact supported by many of the contemporary accounts of the trek. The camps at Lindeman and Bennett appeared to be relatively free of the disorder that characterized the settlements of Skagway, Dyea and Sheep Camp. How much of this was due to the sense of relief that the miners experienced upon completing the arduous trek across the passes is difficult to ascertain. Doubtless the obvious presence of the North West Mounted Police at the major camps north of the summits and their constant patrols between Lake Bennett and the summit contributed to the peacefulness which contrasted so remarkably with the camps of the south slope trails.

Competition for Survival

Capital was quick to find its way into the new townsites at the head of Lynn Canal. Individuals built hotels and restaurants primarily to meet the immediate needs of the frantic hordes of men who raced the winter to Dawson. The building boom intensified as the potential for profit was recognized. Both the towns of Skagway and Dyea acquired a crop of promoters made up enthusiastic entrepreneurs who "boosted" their respective route into the Yukon and heaped abuse upon the other through a very vocal press.

Dyea and the Chilkoot Pass won the first round as traffic ground to a halt in mud on the White Pass trail in the fall of 1897. Then the onslaught of winter gave the advantage to Skagway as snow covered the frozen bogs and mudholes, paving the boulder-strewn White Pass trail with hard-packed snow and ice. The thousands of pack horses and pack mules that had been landed at Skagway finally came into their own. Although the coming of winter and the closure of the water route from Bennett to Dawson had taken the urgency out ot the rush, the pack trains continued to increase. The trip to the head of Lake Bennett which had taken weeks and cost the lives of many horses was reduced to a round trip of four days. Packing rates dropped to 20¢ and then to 12¢ per pound.[14] This battle for the patronage of the new arrivals then intensified as business interests in Dyea laid plans for a cable tramway to hoist supplies over the summit.

The Chilkoot Tramways

The steep gradient of the Chilkoot discouraged the use of pack animals and wagons. While wagons could be used on the lower portion of the trail and pack horses could be used to Sheep Camp, they found only limited use beyond that point. Until late 1897 the Chilkoot trail was basically a foot trail where the miner had little choice but to use his or a hired back to get his goods over the summit. In the latter part of 1897, Archie Burns, a seasoned veteran of the Yukon and Alaska, established the first crude mechanization of transportation over the trail. His primitive hoist consisted of a wooden windlass powered by a single horse walking in a circle. The machine wound a long loop of rope, to which sleds of supplies were attached, up the steep incline.[15] By December of 1897 the horse was replaced by a gasoline engine on the summit, a drum pulley and 1500 feet of cable which pulled the loaded sleds up the snow-covered slope. The charge for the use of Burns's hoist was 2¢ per pound.[16]

The ingenuity of Archie Burns was only the beginning; by the spring of 1898 there were a number of aerial tramways of various designs operating on the Chilkoot trail in addition to Burns's device. The Alaska Railway and Transportation Company constructed a tramway that began about two miles above Sheep Camp and hauled goods to the summit. This bucket tramway consisted of a gasoline-powered cable to which were attached numerous buckets capable of carrying 100 pounds of cargo each.[17] A second bucket tramway, operated by the Dyea-Klondike Transportation Company, carried supplies in two large buckets swung on a long cable driven by a steam engine and unsupported except for an anchor at either end of the line. The buckets carried 500 pounds each, 300 feet above the ground, taking 15 minutes to reach the summit from the Scales. The charge was 5¢ a pound.[18]

The most elaborate and ultimately most successful cable tramway was operated by the Chilkoot Railroad and Transportation Company. A group of Tacoma, Washington, businessmen had sent a team of surveyors out onto the Chilkoot to determine the feasibility of constructing a road and cable tramway across the mountains from Dyea to a point in Canada. Construction was begun on December 10, but due to various problems and changes in the initial plan, the line was not completed until May 1898. Ultimately, the tramway consisted of two loops of cable, one of which ran from the south end of the Taiya Canyon at Canyon City to Sheep Camp, while the other, to which the load was transferred automatically, ran on over the summit to the north end of Crater Lake. The first loop was four miles in length, while the latter was four and one-quarter miles long. The operating company also had facilities for hauling goods from tidewater to the tramway and from Crater Lake to Lindeman City.[19] Charges for conveying a miner's outfit from the wharves at Dyea to Lake Lindeman in the spring of 1898 was 7 1/2¢-8¢ a pound, one-tenth the highest charges of the rainy fall of 1897.[20]

The three major tramway companies - the Alaska Railway and Transportation Company, the Dyea-Klondike Transportation Company and the Chilkoot Railway and Transportation Company - agreed to combine their separate operations on a through-freight basis under the common name of The Chilkoot Pass Route, charging a rate of 10¢ per pound on goods travelling from the coast to the head of Lake Bennett. Plans to dismantle the overlapping portions of the tramways and to use the machinery to extend the facility beyond Crater Lake to Lake Lindeman were never implemented; nevertheless, for the Indian packers who had held the Klondike-bound traffic in an iron-fisted monopoly, charging what they wished, the tramway was a disaster. Their services were relegated to the section of the trail from Crater Lake to Lake Lindeman.[21] The combined tramway company dispatched the rectangular cargo cars at a rate of one every minute, dumping nine tons of freight at the Crater Lake depot every hour of the day and night.[22]

The tramways increased the advantage of the Dyea promoters in the fight for supremacy over the White Pass trail and Skagway. There was so much traffic, however, that the tramway was never idle. Long delays and charges of favouritism plagued the Chilkoot Route. Sufficient business was generated by the rush north at the Skagway rate of 10¢ per pound that incentive to further lower the rates did not exist. The professional packers on the White Pass trail, using the wagon road constructed by George Brackett, were able to secure enough business at the prevailing rate while only Brackett was forced to lower the tolls on his road to encourage its use.[23]

The towns of Skagway and Dyea continued to berate each other as their various business interests sought to capitalize on the rush; the events of April 1898 showed the extent to which the bitter rivalry was taken. Early in March a storm had begun on the Chilkoot and continued with only the occasional letup until the beginning of May. During one of the few calm periods, on April 3, after a particularly heavy snowfall which had completely buried the Canadian customs post on the Chilkoot summit, men began making their way from Sheep Camp to the summit with packs of supplies. The lull lasted from 7 A.M. to 10 A.M., but the impatient miners were loathe to waste what little time remained before the waterway would be open. Once at the summit the storm began again, leaving the packers little choice but to tramp through it back to Sheep Camp as the weather would not allow them to stay on the summit for any length of time.[24] Some of the miners never reached the camp.

On April 4 Inspector Belcher of the North West Mounted Police was informed of a tremendous snowslide that had engulfed the group of returning miners, by an employee of the Chilkoot Railroad and Transportation Company, who also notified him of the loss of 19 tramway employees.[25] Meanwhile, the news of the slide had reached Sheep Camp and within minutes, 1500 of its residents were on the trail to dig out the party that had numbered about 200. Although the discussion on the exact number of dead was never resolved, it was certain that more than 50 people died under the mass of snow.[26]

Belcher received the news with a great deal of apprehension, as he had sent a constable on a routine patrol down the American slope and feared for his safety. Subsequently, another policeman was dispatched to find the constable and offer what assistance was necessary to the United States officials for the relief work.[27] Superintendent Steele, upon hearing of the disaster, ordered Belcher down the slope with a party of men to organize the orderly exhumation of the bodies and to look after the interests of any British subjects involved in the slide. It is possible that the presence of the Canadians prevented the disreputable element, so evident on the trail and in the camps, from looting the bodies and camps of the dead. Once Steele was convinced of their trustworthiness, he surrendered the outfits of the victims to the committee of American citizens who had been organized to notify the next-of-kin and to forward the respective property.[28] The bodies of the dead were interred at Dyea by the United States army under the command of Colonel Thomas Anderson.[29]

The press in Skagway reported the incident, and to the people promoting Dyea and the Chilkoot trail, the account was sensationalized with unusual carelessness. A stinging condemnation was delivered by the editor of the Dyea *Trail* in which he accused the "Skauans" of magnifying the already awful truth without due regard for the thousands of anxious relatives awaiting news at home in the south.[30] Numerous less dramatic incidents and subsequent editorial battles between the newspapers of Skagway and Dyea fuelled the simmering vocal war between the supportive factions of the two towns.

The Brackett Wagon Road

The White Pass, from the days of its discovery by Captain William Moore, had been thought a possible railroad route into the Yukon country. About 1000 feet lower than the Chilkoot Pass, the White Pass was also more gradual in its approach to the coastal mountain summit. Captain Moore had invested heavily in the harbour at the foot of the trail before the rush and had an undying faith in the potential of the Pass as an entrance to the Yukon. With the onslaught of the rush, the crowds were greeted with only four miles of wagon road leading to a treacherous, and soon to be impassable, trail.

In the late summer of 1897, George Brackett, one time mayor of Minneapolis and an ex-railroad engineer, travelled north to visit one of his sons in Skagway. On board the *City of Seattle*, he met Judge J.H. Acklen who was bound to the White Pass to examine its potential for a wagon road and eventually a railroad into the Yukon interior. While the Judge surveyed the White Pass route, Brackett, convinced of the superiority of the Chilkoot trail, invested in building lots in Dyea. On the other hand, Judge Acklen, completely satisfied with his brief view of the White Pass, found a group of 14 like-minded individuals including Norman Smith, who claimed to have surveyed a feasible route for a road, and formed a company to build it. The Skagway and Yukon Transportation and Improvement Company was incorporated in the state of Washington on October 19, 1897. On a south-bound ship, Brackett and Acklen were once again thrown together by circumstances and upon docking at Seattle, Brackett became a reluctant and as yet, uncommitted member of the company, having agreed only to return to Skagway as overseer of the road construction and not as an investor.[31]

Brackett arrived in Skagway a second time on November 6, 1897. As if symptomatic of the problems to follow, he found the once-enthusiastic plans for the road at a standstill. Only a bunkhouse had been constructed on the future site of White Pass City. Typical of other "boom time" enterprises, the transportation and its supporters tended to buoy up the elaborate plans with words rather than sound financial backing; but Brackett, having fully accepted the challenge, was undaunted even when he discovered that Smith's survey was a fraud. The survey had been done with a pocket compass, filling gaps in the chain of knowledge with a great deal of conjecture.[32]

On November 8, 1897 Brackett was drawn deeper into the scheme. With a capital account of $3500 of his personal funds, construction was begun. The reluctant overseer had become the road's most committed supporter. The first two paydays were met but by the third, the meager treasury was exhausted as none of the company's stock had been subscribed. Judge Acklen lost hope due to his unsuccessful efforts to rally investors and made only a half-hearted attempt to meet his own financial obligation as a charter member of the company. The Judge was purged from the company by the treasurer who, when his later attempts at double-dealing failed, absconded with what remained in the treasury.[33] Brackett had one remaining option, short of leaving the ill-fated project. Early in December he took over the leadership of the company, believing that since the over-cautious "dead wood" had been removed, the project would make headway in its attempts to acquire financing.[34]

Meanwhile, work on the troubled road was progressing. By December 20, 1897 over 250 men were at work building bridges, blasting rock, macadamizing and corduroying the newly cleared corridor. The construction had been begun at the summit with the intention of completing the most difficult portion back toward the coast before the heavy snows of winter made work impossible. This added to the expense of the operations as everything from blasting powder to dried beans had to be packed to the camps which were separated from by the infamous trail.[35]

Once Brackett took complete charge of the project his money problems, far from being over, were at least under his personal control. Funds rolled in sporadically due to his unceasing efforts to wring money out of old friends and business associates. Work continued through the winter and early spring, payrolls were often late and creditors threatened foreclosure just as temporary financial relief arrived, allowing Brackett a short respite. While Brackett's company balanced on the verge of collapse, he became involved in a heated exchange with the Chilkoot tramway interests in which charges of misrepresentation were levelled against him. He responded with counter-charges as part of the continuing battle between Skagway and Dyea, and in mid-February he attempted to collect tolls on the partially completed road below White Pass City. The steady stream of pack trains and miners failed to be intimidated by the toll gates and Brackett was forced to appeal to influential friends in Washington, who secured military protection for his toll gates, despite the fact that he had no legal rights. The negotiations and lobbying for Brackett's right-of-way had begun in November 1897, but passage of the necessary legislation dragged through Congress until May 14, 1898 when a newly arrived competitor, the White Pass and Yukon Route Railway Company, managed to beat his right-of-way application for government approval. In one final attempt to gain the concession, the case for the wagon road, at that time only complete to White Pass City, was pleaded on the grounds that he had started development before the railroad. Brackett was given his choice of rights-of-way, making the road and collection of tolls legal.[36]

The attempts, on Brackett's behalf, to secure the right to collect tolls on the Canadian extension of his road, which during the winter ran out over the snow to Windy Arm on Lake Bennett, did not meet with the same success. The Canadian government was unwilling to grant the necessary authority for the toll or the road itself. The prevailing concern with the advantages of an all-Canadian route was voiced by Commissioner Walsh:

> The duty of our government is not to grant any charters or privileges to any person for any railway, steamboat, telegraph or horse or wagon trails, from our southern boundary to the interior that can be connected with any point on the United States coast. We should reserve the outlet of this district for ourselves...Let us find a harbour, if we have to go to Fort Simpson [sic]. It will have no competitor, and Skagway and Dyea will return to what they were a year ago.[37]

Without the Canadian approval, the wagon road was a dead issue. Time had run out for the valiant entrepreneur.

A British firm, the Close Brothers, directing their Alaskan subsidiary, the Pacific and Arctic Railway and Navigation Company, had begun a railway through the White Pass in May of 1898. The White Pass and Yukon Route railway was a well-financed international corporation and Brackett realized he could not fight it successfully. During negotiations through June 1898, Brackett bargained away his wagon road right-of-way for less than half of his asking price. The railway company paid $50,000 for compensation to Brackett for losses resultant from the railroad construction and agreed to purchase the roadbed itself for an additional $50,000.[38]

The irony of the situation could hardly have escaped George Brackett in the years to come. He had gone to Skagway to visit a son and had ended up laying the foundation for access to the Yukon River valley. Although the wagon road was used sporadically for several years following the rush as an alternative to the often snowbound railway, its birth and death had occupied a space of less than one year during which time the packing charges per pound had dropped from the 50¢-75¢ per pound charged by the Indians when Brackett began construction, to 12¢ per pound charged by the packers on the wagon road.[39]

Railroads into the Yukon

The Klondike gold rush caused a stampede of investors to the Yukon which in itself was as spectacular as the human rush through the mountain passes. Transportation, by whatever means, was the key to the wealth in the gold fields. While the problem of access to the Klondike inspired an array of fantastic solutions, ranging from hot-air balloons and monorails, to a network of Norwegian skiers strung out from Dyea to Dawson operating pony express-style relays, a substantial group of men put their faith in railways, the 19th-century solution to transportation problems.[40] The rush had come on the eve of a boom in Canadian railway building. Government support, access to London money markets and the general prosperity of the pre-war period would result in a tremendous increase in Canadian railway mileage. By 1914 Canada would rank sixth in the world for total railway mileage and on a per capita basis none could equal her.[41] It is not surprising then, that in 1897 a total of 32 railroad companies deluged the Canadian government with applications for charters to build railroads into the Yukon, proposing a variety of routes. In the same year, ten companies were granted incorporation by the province of British Columbia, while the United States incorporated an additional 12 companies between 1897 and 1899 who sought to push roads across Alaska into the gold fields.[42] The tremendous optimism concerning the potential of the Yukon valley sparked the formation of two railway companies before the panic of the rush itself. Captain William Moore, discoverer and enthusiastic promoter of the White Pass route, sought financial assistance from a number of sources as early as 1895 when the British Columbia Development Association placed a small amount of money at his disposal to cut a trail toward the pass from his homestead at the mouth of the Skagway River. The financiers were a group of British capitalists who had been exploring the West Coast in search of investment projects. This initial investment was followed by the incorporation of two companies in the spring of 1897, some weeks before news of the gold reached the West Coast of the United States.[43] On May 8, 1897 the British Columbia Yukon Railway Company was incorporated to build a line from the head of Lynn Canal via the White Pass to the northern boundary of British Columbia. The second proposal came with the incorporation of the British Yukon Mining, Trading and Transportation Company in June 1897. This latter company proposed a line from the head of Lynn Canal via the White Pass to the trading post at Selkirk on the Yukon River.[44] Although their proposals indicated plans to build from tidewater, the absence of enabling legislation in Alaska prevented the two companies from acquiring rights-of-way across the Alaska panhandle, a problem that would later hamper others, including the determined George Brackett. As a result of the failure of the development company, the charters held by the two companies, both subsidiaries of the British Columbia Development Association, fell into the hands of the Close Brothers, a British financial house.[45]

The British financiers were in an ideal position to build the railway into the Yukon in the early spring of 1898. On March 29, 1898 the Close Brothers obtained a charter, under the laws of West Virginia, to build a railroad across Alaska. When the President of the United States signed the bill into law allowing for the construction of railways in Alaska, the newly formed Pacific and Arctic Railway and Navigation Company was at the top of the list of applicants to the Secretary of the Interior for rights-of-way. The legislation had cleared the way for the railroad from Skagway to Selkirk, but the real task lay ahead at the threshold of the new frontier.[46]

Meanwhile, the Liberal government in Ottawa worked towards the objective of an "all Canadian" route. Such a route would secure the lucrative and expanding Yukon trade for Canadian commercial interests as well as add an additional degree of security to Canadian sovereignty over the heretofore inaccessible territory. Various routes were surveyed by teams of government surveyors through the winter of 1897-98 and by January the concensus lay with the Stikine River-Teslin Lake route.[47] The proposal by the government to parliament was for a route relying on a railway link between the Pacific Ocean and the navigable waters of Teslin Lake which drained unobstructed into the Yukon River system. Access to Canadian territory through the Alaskan panhandle could be had via the Stikine River which emptied into the ocean at Wrangell. A modification of the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1825 by the Washington treaty of 1871 gave Canadian ships the right of navigation for commercial purposes through the archipelago to Canadian territory. From Telegraph Creek on the Stikine River, about 150 miles of railroad would be required to carry passengers and freight to the head of navigation on the Teslin River.[48]

After a great deal of debate that centred on the gold-bearing potential of the land through which the railway was to pass, the bill eased through parliament. Mackenzie and Mann, Canada's noted builders of railways, were to be the contractors, receiving a subsidy in the form of a land grant of 25,000 acres per mile of line built. The agreement prompted the Conservative opposition to equate the gold yield of the Klondike valley and the potential of the nearly four million acres the contractors were to receive. The imaginary wealth was staggering compared with the risk to Mackenzie and Mann. While the bill passed the House, the Conservative-dominated Senate stopped it.[49] The "all Canadian" route was effectively put to rest while the Chilkoot and White passes remained the only practical routes to the Yukon. Led by the Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, the government turned its attention to the acquisition of a port at the head of Lynn Canal which was the only means of retrieving the Yukon trade and securing access to the Yukon for military purposes. The case for Canadian control of Pyramid Harbour or Skagway was put unsuccessfully before the Joint High Commission on the Alaskan boundary question, forcing Canada to rely on the routes into the Yukon that crossed foreign territory.[50]

Construction on the White Pass and Yukon Route railway began in May 1898. It was to be the only railway, of the many planned, that actually penetrated the Yukon valley.

The White Pass and Yukon Route

Sir Thomas Tancred, the British representative of the Close Brothers, and Samuel H. Graves and E.C. Hawkins, the representatives of the firm's American interests, arrived in Skagway in April 1898. Graves and Hawkins were responsible for the preliminary feasibility survey which concluded that it was impossible to put a railroad through the White Pass. During a meeting with Tancred in a Skagway hotel, they prepared recommendations for the backers in London. As the meeting was about to close, they were interrupted by Michael J. Heney who had been listening to their conversation. As an independent railway contractor, Heney had been drawn to the Yukon and Alaska by the possibility of building a railroad across the new frontier. His own survey had convinced him that a railroad could be built over the White Pass. Won over by Heney's experience and knowledgeable persuasion, the recommendations were shelved and preparations were made to begin the railroad. Consequently, at the end of May 1898, it was Heney who supervised the arrival of the first men and supplies at Skagway. The construction phase of the White Pass and Yukon Route was begun on May 28, 1898.[51]

The remote nature of Skagway and the proposed route to Bennett Lake and northward presented the railroaders, like all the enterprises before them, with the problem of supply. Equipment and construction materials lay over 1000 miles to the south in Vancouver and Seattle, linked to Skagway by tenuous shipping lines already overcrowded by the swarming hordes headed to the Klondike. The situation was not to improve, for when the rush ended, a new pressure on West Coast shipping lines resulted from an increase in the United States government's requirements for the Spanish-American War, declared in 1898. Local lumber was found to be unsuitable for the needs of the railroad which meant every board foot had to be imported. The labour supply also presented problems. At the height of the rush in May, it made no sense to recruit men in the normal fashion and transport them to Skagway only to have them join the rush for gold. Men were hired from the crowds on the trails and placed in the construction camps along the way, even though they were inexperienced and untrained. The feeding of the large crew presented an immense problem which the railroad company solved by establishing a commissary department to provide cooked food in the construction camps.[52]

The railway hired over 1000 men who, for one reason or another, were delayed in Skagway, reducing the merchandising possibilities to a captive market. The ensuing uproar on the merchants' behalf threatened to cause serious problems for the White Pass and Yukon Route. The town council sought an injunction against the railroad which had laid its roadbed through the centre of the town. While the disgruntled town council met on June 14 to decide what payment should be exacted for the town right-of-way, the work gangs laid the rails up the centre of Broadway, thereby outmaneuvring the town council with a fait accompli. Land was then purchased for the construction of a spur line to re-route freight trains around the centre of the town.[53]

By July 3, 1050 men were working 11 hours a day on the roadbed and by the end of the month, the rails extended four miles out of Skagway.[54] The railroad then began the 2885 foot ascent to the White Pass summit, a distance of 14 miles for which 21 miles of track would be required to reduce the grade. At this stage, the railroad came into direct conflict with George Brackett's wagon road. Heavy rock work and blasting continually sent debris down, and while Brackett's right-of way was the most direct route to the summit, the railroad could not in effect build parallel to it; and so after protracted negotiations, the White Pass and Yukon Route purchased Brackett's road.[55]

Although the railroad finally reached the summit on February 18, 1899 it was not without problems. During August the railway work force had been reduced by half as the news of a gold strike in the Atlin Lake district to the east reached the construction camps. Men left immediately, many taking their tools to dig for gold. Other less dramatic desertions constantly hampered the railway, while the onslaught of the northern winter with its heavy snows and numbing cold forced the relief of work crews often after only one hour of work.[56] At mile 15, the work crews balanced on platforms supported by crowbars driven into the solid rock of a cliff far above the canyon floor and blasted a narrow ledge for the steel rails. At mile 16, a tunnel 250 feet long was bored through a mountain, but this was the only tunnel on the entire route. Numerous wood bridges and trestles built during the early years were replaced later by steel and concrete. Although the construction of the narrow gauge line to the summit had presented monumental obstructions, the White Pass and Yukon Route engineers proved equal to the task, establishing one of the most spectacular, albeit one of the shorter, railroads ever constructed.[57]

The first passenger train inaugurating a twice-daily service to the White Pass summit, left Skagway at 10:05 A.M. February 20, 1899, arriving at its destination at 1:30 that afternoon. Ostensibly an excursion train, 300 men were put to work to clear and keep clear the last mile of track, thus ensuring the participation of its passengers in the celebrations at the summit.[58]

From the summit, the line was pushed out over the rocky terrain, climbing to its final summit of 2916 feet at the North West Mounted Police post at Log Cabin, 33 miles from the coast. It took less than five months to construct the road to the head of Lake Bennett despite the fact that gravel was nonexistent beyond the Skagway valley. It had to be hauled, in severe weather conditions, from the lower reaches of the line to provide ballast for the roadbed which was complete to Bennett by June 20, when the laying of rail began. Less than a month later, on July 6, 1899, the railroad was complete to Bennett City.[59]

Even before the rails had left the summit, M.J. Heney, the Canadian railway contractor in charge of building the road, had organized the Red Line Transportation Company, which hauled general freight and railway materials from the summit to Bennett. Ticket agents at Skagway could quote through-rates for passengers and freight between the lake and ocean in the early spring of 1899, since horse-drawn freight sleds and passenger stages operated by Heney used the partially completed wagon road. The stages met the morning train at the summit daily and left Bennett and Log Cabin daily to connect with the trains returning to Skagway. There were accommodations for 40 passengers who paid a fare of $5 between the end of steel and the lakehead. With the arrival of the first train from the summit, the Red Line Transportation Company curtailed its operations.[60]

The construction of the last 71 miles of railroad was begun after a rousing spike-driving ceremony at Lake Bennett.[61] Crews were sent to the Whitehorse terminus to begin work at both ends, working toward the proposed meeting point at Caribou Crossing (Carcross) at the lower end of Lake Bennett.[62] The line from Whitehorse to Caribou Crossing was completed on June 8, 1900, while the road from Bennett north was not completed until July 29, 1900.[63] The first train ran through from Skagway to Whitehorse on July 30. A through service had been offered by the railroad company, using horse-drawn sleds on the lake and river ice via "through-freight agreements" between the railroad company and the numerous steamboat companies that operated above the White Horse Rapids.

Steamers on the Upper Yukon

Among the thousands of people who had struggled over the passes were the business associates of Francis M. Rattenbury. Rattenbury, an architect who had recently designed the legislative buildings for the youthful province of British Columbia, was drawn north by the same promise of profit that had generated the multitude of railway promoters. On March 2, 1898 Rattenbury and others formed the Bennett Lake and Klondyke Navigation Company under an ambitious and optimistic list of articles of incorporation.[64] The company proposed to operate steamers on the chain of lakes in the upper Yukon River drainage system, to build a railway between Marsh Lake and the Hootalinqua (Teslin) River and to build a railroad or tramway around the White Horse Rapids.[65] Typical of other proposals for improving the transportation of people and goods into Dawson, the Bennett Lake and Klondyke Navigation Company aimed at avoiding this famous constriction on the Yukon River system by providing a rail link to the unobstructed waterway of the Teslin River.

During the winter of 1897-98, the navigation company packed the dismantled parts of three sternwheel steamboats. The boilers and works were dragged over the White Pass and about halfway down Lake Bennett to the mouth of Wheaton River.[66] An advance party had found a stand of timber on the location that would provide the lumber, heavy timber and firewood. The site was cleared, cabins built, the sawmill erected and trees felled. Lumber was dried and stacked as the keels for the three steamboats were laid in place. The lonely spot that had witnessed only the occasional traveller now hummed with the manufacture of lumber, charcoal for the blacksmith's forge and then hardware for the boats.[67] The engineers complained about the lack of firebrick to line the fire boxes. Clay was found at a depth of 20 feet on the banks of the Wheaton River and when mixed with the camp cook's salt and fired in the shape of bricks, solved the pressing problem. Other companies building steamboats at various locations on Bennett bought the locally manufactured bricks and some were shipped as far as Dawson for $1 each plus freight.[68]

While the Bennett Lake and Klondyke Navigation Company shipwrights laboured on the boats through the spring of 1898, the gold rush continued over the mountain passes. The tent cities at the head of Lakes Lindeman and Bennett continued to grow until there was no place left to pitch another tent. Would-be engineers from other gold-producing areas of the world were drawn to the new gold fields. Men bound for the "new diggings" brought experience from the Rand in South Africa, from Australia, New Zealand, Peru and Bolivia into the temporary communities that waited for spring. The cosmopolitan nature of the large settlements of Bennett and Lindeman was also characteristic of the smaller settlements and camps that occupied "every nook and draw" on the shores of Lake Bennett. Wherever the trees promised suitable lumber, the sled tracks would veer off the main trail and the ring of hammer and saw would announce the establishment of yet another miniature boatyard. All nationalities were represented. Many proudly flew their respective flags over the makeshift camps, but most were American.[69]

Other enterprises had crossed the mountain passes during the winter. Portable sawmills had been "knocked down" and taken over the trails to meet the tremendous demand for sawn lumber used in constructing boats and buildings. The manager of the Bennett Lake and Klondyke Navigation Company, O.H. Partridge, operated a sawmill for the company on Millhaven Bay near the Wheaton River, shifting later to the production of ties for the White Pass and Yukon Route railway.[70] A much larger operation was established by Mike King, a logger of note from the west coast of British Columbia, at Caribou Crossing under the

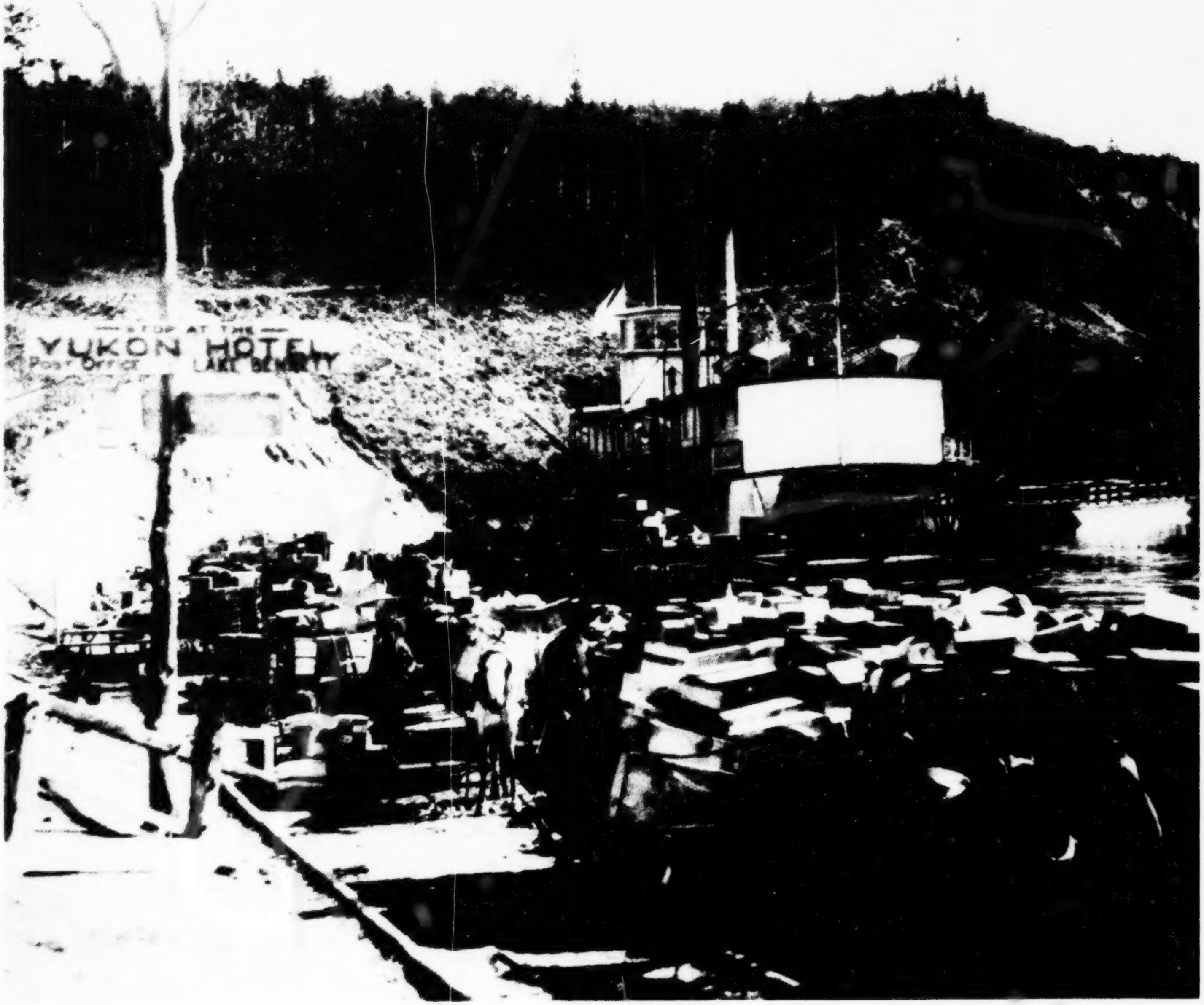
STOP AT THE
YUKON HOTEL
Post Office
LAKE BENNETT

Figure 6. Steamboat landing at Bennett, British Columbia. (British Columbia Provincial Archives.)

name of the Upper Yukon Trading Company.[71] Before striking out on his own, King had run the large sawmill of the Victoria Yukon Trading Company at Bennett City. This company also built a large number of the cumbersome rectangular scows for the transport of freight to Dawson.[72]

The lumber for these and numerous other operations came from the west arm of Lake Bennett and the Taku and Windy arms of Tagish Lake. Windy Arm was the terminus of the Too-Chi (Tutski) trail from the White Pass and as a result, a tent community, a sawmill and boat building was in evidence.[73] Relatively few stampeders went to Lake Bennett by this later route compared to those that swarmed to Bennett City, the population of which swelled to 10,000 before the ice cleared the waterway.

The first boat in the Bennett Lake and Klondyke Navigation Company's fleet slid down into the icy water of Lake Bennett just after the spring breakup. She was christened the *Ora:*

> All the workmen were elated when she was christened in the old-fashioned style, and the drinks were thoroughly enjoyed by having a share in her completion...What you see now a short time ago was lying on the wharfs at Skagway and Dyea. What it means to see those engines working with beautiful rhythm, the smoke belching from her smoke stacks, can only be fully understood by those who helped in her construction.[74]

The *Ora* was not the first steamboat to ply the waters of Lake Bennett and the upper Yukon River system.[75] At least eight other boats were built from parts hauled in from the south. The *Nora* and *Flora* were built as sister ships of the *Ora* by the Bennett Lake and Klondyke Navigation Company. While only the *Flora* stayed above the White Horse Rapids, the *Nora* and *Ora* were "shot through" the foamy barrier to operate on the Whitehorse to Dawson route.[76] The steamer *Flora* was kept operating from Bennett City to Miles Canyon or Canyon City at the head of Norman Macauly's tramway system. With the aid of this wooden tramway which skirted the white water, the Bennett Lake and Klondyke Navigation Company was able to offer a through-freight and passenger service from Bennett Lake to Dawson.

The *A.J. Goddard* and the *J.H. Kilbourne* were 40-foot steamers brought over the Chilkoot Pass during the winter and reassembled at Lake Bennett for river service.[77] Other steamers were also built at Lake Bennett by individuals and by companies. They included the *Willie Irving*, the *Emma Knott*, the *Bellingham* and the *Clara*.[78] Only one steamer was built at the head of Teslin Lake. It was hauled on horse-drawn sleds from the head of the Stikine River to the head of Teslin Lake, reassembled and put into service on the Dawson to Whitehorse run.[79] During the spring of 1898 the waterways that had only known the sound of sails and oars echoed to the steady slap of paddlewheels and the staccato of the steam whistle breaking the remote silence of the northern lakes.

Although many of the steamers were sent through the White Horse Rapids to operate on the run between the foot of the rapids and Dawson, some remained and more were built to carry goods to the head of Miles Canyon from Bennett. From both the White Pass and Chilkoot trails, thousands of tons of goods arrived at the shipping company's warehouse at Bennett City. Independent packers and the Chilkoot tramways, through the winter and spring, dumped the freight at the head of the lakes among the thousands of stampeders to await the spring breakup of ice. The fleet of lake steamers carried the goods to Canyon City at the head of Miles Canyon where the freight was portaged around the obstruction on a crude tramway to a growing fleet of river steamers which carried the freight to Dawson.

At Canyon City, the head of navigation on the Yukon River system, the enterprising Norman Macauly had constructed an unusual tramway. It consisted of wooden iron-wheeled tramcars which rode on wooden rails spiked to wooden ties at long intervals, not unlike a railroad bed. The tramcars were mounted on crude, cast-iron flanged wheels which fit over the round surface of the peeled logs. Through four miles of hills and valleys, the wooden track wound its way to the foot of the White Horse Rapids.[80]

Macauly had built the tramway in the spring of 1898, along with a saloon and freight facilities at either end of the white water. Success of the enterprise was assured by the continuing flow of food and equipment from the mountain passes to Dawson. So successful was Macauly's enterprise, in fact, that John Hepburn duplicated the facility on the opposite bank, although Macauly's tramway continued to dominate.[81] In June 1899 Macauly purchased Hepburn's company and consolidated the two operations in the Miles Canyon and Lewes River Tramway Company.[82]

The multifaceted transportation link that existed in the summer of 1899 between the Pacific coast and Dawson was cumbersome, although a vast improvement over what had existed only one year earlier. It contained no less than five or six "break-of-bulk" points, although the completion of the railroad to Bennett reduced this somewhat on the White Pass route. The rivalry between the coastal ports of Dyea and Skagway continued to demand that the shipping companies heading into Lynn Canal give customers a choice of the opposing routes. In an attempt to secure an increasing volume of traffic, the White Pass and Yukon Route arranged through-freight agreements with the Alaska Steamship Company and the Canadian Development Company on the Yukon River, and with the Miles Canyon and Lewes River Tramway Company, which supplied transportation over the White Horse portage.[83] While the Chilkoot tramway consortium had offered a viable and welcome alternative to the methods and routes of conveyance during the height of the rush, it was rapidly losing the battle for Yukon trade with the railway.

The completion of the White Pass and Yukon Route railroad to the foot of White Horse Rapids on July 29, 1900 caused a major realignment of traffic. Apart from the steamers needed to service the Atlin district, the fleet of lake steamers operating from Bennett to Miles Canyon became obsolete. After news of the Atlin strike, a number of companies dispatched steamers to the extreme east branch of Taku Arm of Tagish Lake where the freight for the new gold fields was portaged to Atlin Lake steamers by a short steam tramway.[84] The White Pass and Yukon Route contemplated but never completed a branch line from Log Cabin to Taku City on Atlin Lake, leaving the district dependent on the steamboat connection with the railroad.[85] By 1901 the river division of the White Pass and Yukon Route railroad owned the steamers servicing the Atlin run which was perhaps the last move necessary to gain control of Yukon traffic.[86]

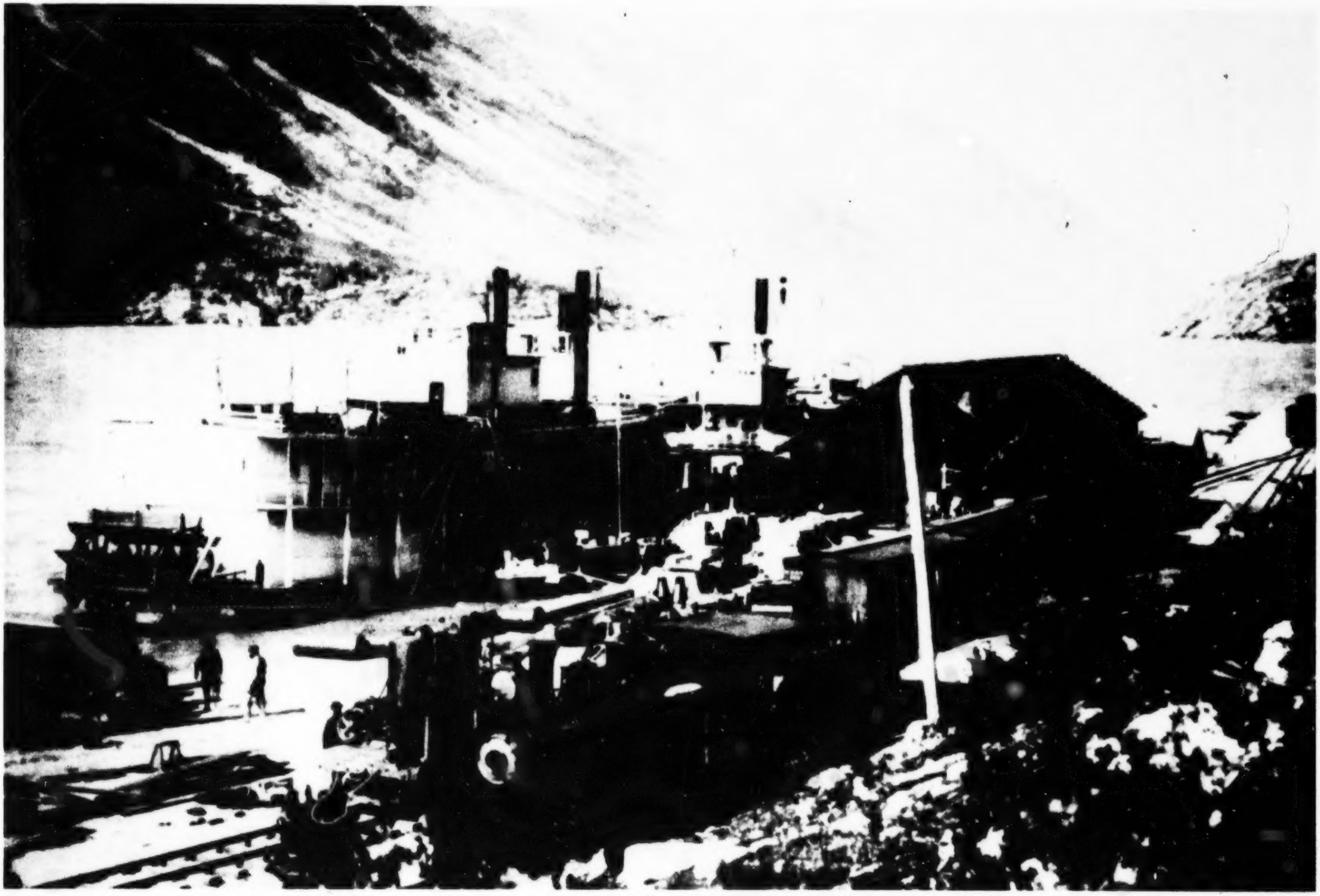

Figure 7. Canyon City at the head of Miles Canyon was the beginning of Macaulay's tramway. (Public Archives Canada.)

In what appeared to be a deliberate attempt to monopolize the Yukon trade, the White Pass and Yukon Route had purchased competing transportation facilities until it was the only operation from the south into the Yukon settlements. Of course, once the railroad had been completed to Lake Bennett, the viability of the Chilkoot tramways was questionable. The Yukon and White Pass Route paid $150,000 for the tramway operation and in January, beginning at Crater Lake, dismantled the entire system. Only the cable towers and the stripped cable remained, as lonely reminders of the fierce battle for route supremacy between the Chilkoot and White passes into the Yukon.[87] This action on the part of the railroad company, although ruthlessly sensible in the competitive transportation business. received harsh comment. During subsequent legal action the company was charged with restraint of free trade and conspiracy to monopolize the freight and passenger business in Alaska,[88] but the crisis was easily weathered by the potent company.

Even at the infamous White Horse Rapids, the railroad had rendered the Miles Canyon and Lewis River Tramway redundant and was subsequently purchased by the White Pass and Yukon Route. The elimination of the remaining competitor on the southern section of the Yukon route also spelled the end of any possibility of operating steamboats on the lakes with the exception of those running to Atlin. A decision had been made to establish the northern terminus of the railroad at the foot of the rapids instead of continuing to Fort Selkirk. Before the rush, steamers had not extended their voyages beyond Selkirk, but their introduction to the upper river made the earlier termination possible.[89] The railroad would never extend beyond the new town of Whitehorse.

The railroad company's land division purchased a plot of land below the rapids on the west bank opposite the tent city that had grown up at the terminus of Macauly's tramway in late 1899, and proceeded to establish the terminal facilities for the railroad and the wharfage and warehouse for the freight transfer. The town at the proposed terminus was named Closeleigh by White Pass and Yukon Route officials, after the railroad's financiers, the Close Brothers. William Ogilvie objected to the change in name, considering it an unwise innovation, as the "place" had been known as "Whitehorse" for years.[90] On June 11, 1900 the newly formed Whitehorse Board of Trade, led by Norman Macauly, petitioned the commission for incorporation of the town, which was granted to the thriving business centre of 2000 in 1901.[91] The importance of settlements on the lakes to the south of Whitehorse dwindled. Bennett, the hub of activity during the rush, was deserted by its business community for new opportunities in the "future metropolis."[92] By July 1900 the former woodland was covered with tents and at least five two- or three-storey buildings had been erected on the newly surveyed lots. Whitehorse had become the head of navigation on the Yukon River system and the Canadian Development Company, The Yukon Flyer Line and The Klondike Corporation Company (formerly the Bennett Lake and Klondike Navigation Company), as well as the primary sawmills and boat builders, had located offices and facilities in the town.[93] A major realignment had taken place in the gold-rush pattern of Yukon transportation with the completion of the railroad to Whitehorse. The efficiency of supplying the mining operations at Dawson had increased immeasurably. While the future would prove financially tenuous for the White Pass and Yukon Route, in 1901

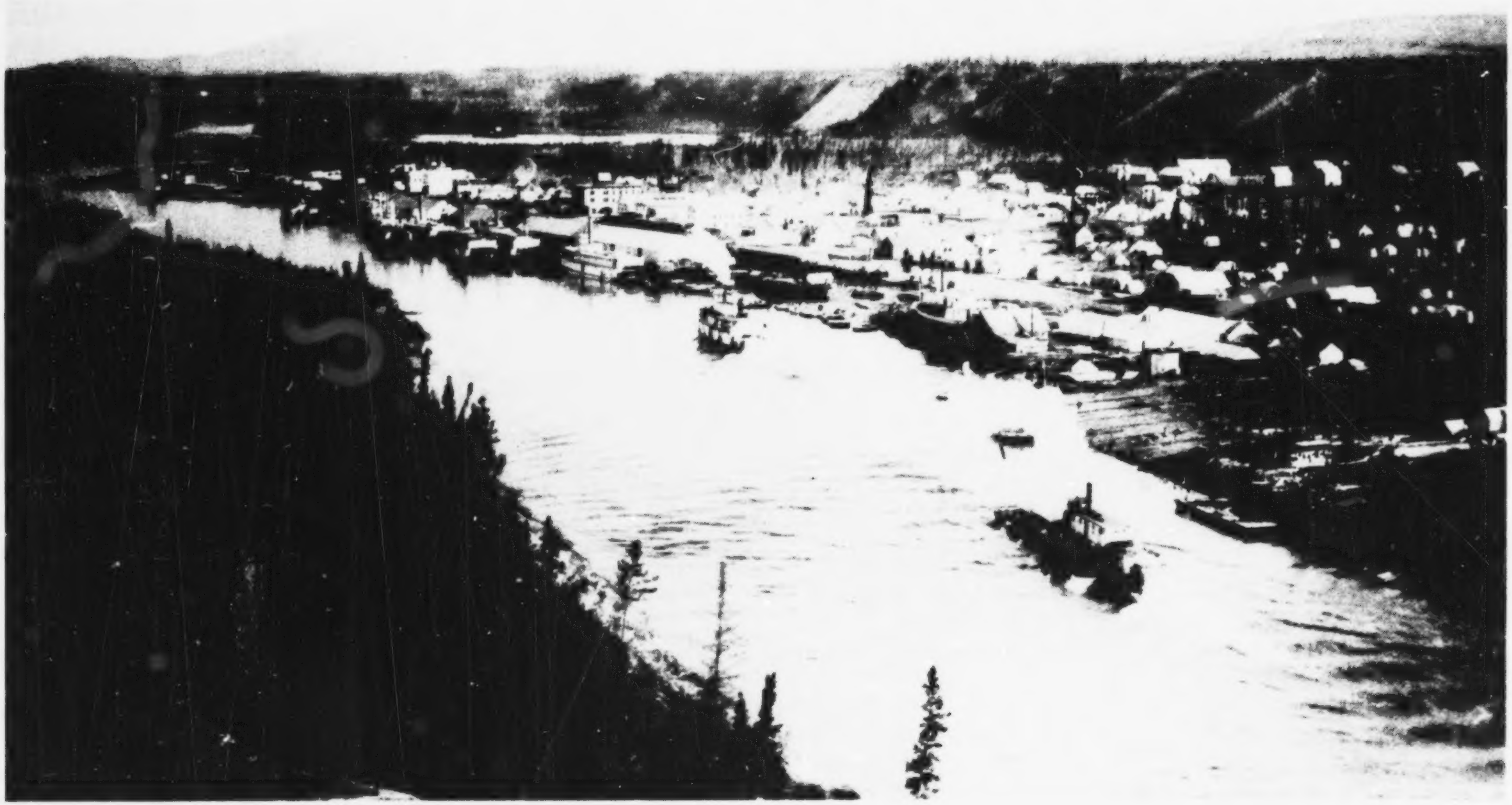

Figure 8. Whitehorse in 1901 as the head of navigation and the end of steel. (Glenbow-Alberta Institute.)

it moved to secure control of all Yukon transportation. The Canadian Development Company, the largest steamship operation on the upper river, suffered financial difficulties as did the other steamboat companies due to unusually low water during the navigation season of 1900. Steamboats and barges were stranded while loaded with freight, much of which was unrecoverable before winter, resulting in sizeable losses and law suits against the company.[94] Complaints from the shippers indicated a lack of confidence in the delivery guarantees of the steamboat company and general dissatisfaction with the route rather than with the railroad company.[95] The management of the White Pass and Yukon Route realized that economic viability of the railroad depended on the reliability of the service which in turn could only be obtained by gaining control of the entire route from Skagway to Dawson. In February 1901 arrangements had been completed to take over the financially troubled Canadian Development Company. The British Yukon Navigation Company, the newly formed river division of the White Pass and Yukon Route, operated a total of 14 boats when the takeover was effected on April 1, 1901.[96] Apart from very minor competition from individually owned steamboats and smaller companies, the White Pass and Yukon Route established monopolistic-like control over the movement of freight from Skagway to Whitehorse and on the upper Yukon River between Whitehorse and Dawson.

Before the gold rush, by the early 1880s, the primary outline of the transportation system into the Yukon had been established by the small transient population of fur traders and prospectors. The intrinsic pressures inherent in the gold-rush conditions emphasized the shortcomings of the existing routes while providing the economic incentive for improvement and development. Construction of the railroad substantially reduced the dependence on the unreliable access route from St. Michael on the lower Yukon River. The railroad made the Yukon one of the most accessible areas of the Canadian north in 1900, remaining an important determinant in the future development in the Yukon.

CONCLUSIONS

The rush over the Chilkoot and White passes reached its zenith in the winter of 1897-98, culminating in the early spring of 1898 when goldseekers in unprecedented numbers scrambled over the mountain barrier to get to the shores of the northern lakes in time to follow the ice to the Klondike. Over 30,000 men, women and children poured over the various accessible summits, 20,000 of these in the brief period from the opening of the customs posts in mid-February to the beginning of May. Thirteen of the 20,000 climbed the Chilkoot, while the other 7000 trekked through the animal-strewn White Pass. Another 8000 stampeders checked their outfits through the customs station at Tagish.[1] The crowd continued to straggle over the passes for some months. In May, 3300 made the climb, but their numbers were already decreasing dramatically, clearly indicating that the peak of the rush was past.[2]

By May 1898 the bustling tent towns of Lindeman and Bennett were jammed with the anxious mass of humanity that had pushed its way through the mountains like a knot through the eye of a needle. There they awaited the signal to start the mad dash for the gold fields. Colonel Samuel B. Steele, Commander of the North West Mounted Police at Bennett, climbed a hill behind the police post on May 29 to see "the start." On the ice-free water of Lake Bennett, Steele counted 800 boats under sail at one time. Sailing down the lakes toward Windy Arm on Tagish Lake aboard the steamer *Kilbourne*, a distance of about 50 miles, Steele observed that at no time was the steamer more than 200 feet from a boat, scow or canoe.[3] Only a few months before, Lake Bennett had known only an occasional traveller. Now it was covered with craft of every conceivable design, from hand-made floating boxes to prefabricated boats and steamers, all of which had been assembled near the now nearly deserted boom towns of Lindeman and Bennett, or in innumerable camps in many unnamed coves along all the upper lakes.

Like a tidal wave, the rush poured down the Yukon River, a source of consternation for Steele who saw in the ungainly flotilla the potential for disaster:

> In view of such a number of boats going down the river together many of them being in the hands of persons absolutely ignorant...of boating. I decided to have each of the scows and canoes registered and numbered, taking the names and addresses of all persons in each boat.[4]

Inspector Strickland, acting on Steele's subsequent orders, began registering and numbering boats and recording the names and origins of all the occupants while overseeing the collection of customs duties at Tagish Post. Boats were also numbered and recorded as they left Bennett. During 1898 over 7000 boats, each carrying an average of four people, were assigned numbers before being allowed to continue down the Yukon River.[5]

This registration procedure was invaluable to the police in response to the many inquiries they received from around the world about friends and relatives in the Yukon and to notify the next-of-kin of those stampeders who died on the trail to the Klondike.[6] At the White Horse Rapids, the most dangerous section of the river, 200 boats were wrecked and 55 outfits were lost by June 1898, but in only a few instances were the owners drowned.[7]

In his usual stern and efficient manner, Steele ordered all competent pilots operating through the Miles Canyon and White Horse Rapids to register with the police. The resultant list was posted for the benefit of the argonauts. Women and children were definitely not allowed to accompany the boats and had to walk around the obstruction. Those who refused the services of a pilot for whatever reason could take their craft through only after it had been inspected by the police. For those who complained about the arbitrary regulations, Steele had only a brusque reply:

> There are many of your countrymen who have said that the Mounted Police make the laws as they go along, and I am going to do so now, for your own good.[8]

By June 1898 the first and largest wave of goldseekers had passed Tagish Post and only about 2000 remained camped at Bennett. The North West Mounted Police had three men stationed at the Chilkoot summit, while plans were already being made to put the White Pass detachment nearer the railroad as it inched its way toward the summit. By July the downriver traffic had decreased greatly, although a small increase was expected in August as the latecomers attempted to reach Dawson before the winter.[9] The sense of urgency had been drained from the rush, which was essentially over. During the winter of 1898-99, the White Pass and Yukon Route railroad reached the summit and began to close the distance to Bennett. Although the Chilkoot tramways that had been operating on the pass since the spring of 1898 still carried freight across the mountains, and some men still trudged up the steep trail, it was no longer necessary. The fate of the Chilkoot was already obvious. Meanwhile, the rush continued to wind down; in 1899 only 5221 people followed the trail past Tagish Post and in 1900 only 4000 people used the route to September.[10] In 1900 the completion of the railroad to Whitehorse and the dismantling of the defunct Chilkoot tramways left the legendary trail deserted. Even the vigilant North West Mounted Police left their post on the Chilkoot by July 1900 with no intention of returning.[11]

The Chilkoot saga ended as strangely as it had begun. In the fall of 1899, a group of investors from Juneau and Dyea, known as the Chilkoot Pass Railway Company, had conceived a plan to revitalize the dying town of Dyea by building a railroad through the Chilkoot Pass to compete with the White Pass and Yukon Route. A railroad was to be laid to the base of the final ascent at the Scales, where a tunnel was to be driven through the mountain at a cost of $250,000. Preliminary surveys were completed and the site of the tunnel was protected from other speculators by recording it as a mineral claim with the United States authorities.[12] In September, a small group of men appeared at the Scales, and observed by the Mounted Police at the summit, they began to erect a number of buildings. Under a cloak of secrecy, the 25-30 man work force assembled the machinery to power the compressed air and steam drills and stockpiled cases of blasting powder in preparation to cutting a tunnel 10 feet wide, 12 feet high and three-quarters of a mile under the notorious "golden stairs."

Work was to begin on the 29th of September along the right-of-way through the Taiya River valley,[13] but from the outset the company was plagued with the problems of disorganization and lack of capital.[14] Then, in July 1900, after a year of undistinguished achievement, the project was reorganized and the Chilkoot Pass Railway Company was merged with the Lynn Canal Shore Line Company. The basic plan was expanded to include an extension to the line running from Skagway through Dyea and the Chilkoot Pass to Bennett.[15] Making the scheme more ambitious, however, did not strengthen the organization and the whole plan dissolved with little tangible evidence of its existence. With its passing, the pass and all of the lore that surrounded it was relegated to history.

Actually a place in the history of the Yukon had been secured for the Chilkoot Pass long before the gold rush. It had been a major trade route for the Tlingit Indians, and only when the prospecting and trading activities of the Europeans and Americans dictated the necessity of a short route into the Yukon were the Indians forced to yield their control in the 1880s. From that point, use of the route increased steadily. While the majority of users were gold prospectors, a small number of scientific and military observers, like William Ogilvie and Frederick Schwatka, climbed and then wrote about the arduous trek through the southern passes well before the gold rush. These narratives were then used by journalists and guidebook writers to "enlighten" the would-be goldseeker, and even before the rush began, the ominous reputation of the Chilkoot indicated the high price that would be exacted for access to the golden Klondike.

The pattern of transportation into the Yukon had thus been established long before the human deluge of 1898. Before the Chilkoot, the Yukon had been penetrated by the Hudson's Bay Company traders along the eastern watershed, but the trails from the east were impractical and were seldom used by gold prospectors who actually favoured the long route up river through St. Michael, Alaska. Of course, this route was dependent on the efficiency of the steamboats plying the unpredictable lower reaches of the Yukon River during a short navigation season. This route was superior to the Chilkoot for the movement of the large quantities of freight required to supply the scattered pre-rush population of the Yukon. This population was almost totally dependent on "outside" sources of supply and the large influx of people after 1896 accentuated the shortcomings of the river route, on which even the increased number of steamers were unable to supply the rapidly expanding population with food. As a result, the ominous spectre of starvation threatened the Yukon. When the gold rush began, a variety of routes were offered to the eager hordes. Although some of the alternatives to the Lynn Canal routes, like the Stikine trail and the St. Michael route, were acceptable options, others were not. The promotion, by various commercial interests, of the Edmonton trail and the Valdez trail were foolish and irresponsible to the point of criminal negligence. Despite the inviting claims of other routes and the poor reputation of the Chilkoot Pass, the majority of goldseekers went to the head of the Lynn Canal, primarily because the two routes offered the shortest and ultimately the quickest way to the gold fields.

The mass of people and freight being moved through the passes encouraged the development of a more sophisticated transportation network, while the threat of starvation in Dawson during the winter of 1897-98 added an urgent incentive to the necessity. Brackett's wagon road on the White Pass trail and the tramway systems of the Chilkoot trail superceded the Indian packers and in turn were replaced by the White Pass and Yukon Route railroad, which became the dominant means of access to the Yukon until the construction of the Alaska Highway in the 1940s. While the gold rush did not determine the patterns of movement into the Yukon, it reinforced the existing pattern, overloaded the most obvious route for a season, and added the incentive for rapid development, the bulk of which occurred through the mountain passes between 1897 and 1900.

The rush emphasized a number of problems for the Canadian government. Primary among these was the uncertainty of sovereign control over a remote, sparsely populated territory removed from Ottawa by the width of a continent. Increased activity in the Yukon had prompted the federal government to dispatch a detachment of the North West Mounted Police to the Yukon in 1894, to act at once as a law-enforcement agency, a government bureaucracy and the symbol of Canadian sovereignty over the district. The role was a familiar one to the North West Mounted. The early development of the Yukon, which was made a separate entity in 1898, was reflected in the expansion of the North West Mounted Police posts along the Yukon River. The first detachment was established at Fort Constantine near the Forty Mile gold fields on the border with Alaska, later moving its headquarters up Herchmer at Dawson when the focus of activity changed to the Klondike River. The incredible rush into the Klondike valley from the south made it necessary for the police to occupy the entire Yukon River valley. A disputed international boundary and the huge influx of American citizens finally induced Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, to take bold and decisive action to protect Canadian interests. The occupation of the summits of the Chilkoot and White passes by a force of well-armed North West Mounted Police in February 1898 established a *de facto* boundary between Alaska and British Columbia. Ultimately, Canada was bitterly disappointed in the decision of the international boundary tribunal in 1903 in favour of the American boundary claim, but the boundary first marked by the presence of the Police remained unchanged. Finally, the Klondike gold rush of 1897-98 forced the Canadian government to take control of the Yukon, using the semi-militaristic North West Mounted Police force as the primary agent to accomplish this goal. True to their growing reputation, the scarlet-clad policemen performed the role dependably and even heroically. If the gold rush motivated the Canadian government, it also provided the economic incentive for the commercial sector to establish a transportation infra-structure through the southwestern Yukon that would form the basis for Yukon development.

The Klondike gold rush was the last great gold rush, although some of the Klondike miners would rush away just as quickly as they had come to the gold diggings at Nome and Fairbanks in Alaska. Inaccessibility of the Yukon River and the economic depression of the 1890s which had forced an unprecedented horde to the fabulous Klondike provided the foundation of a legend.

ENDNOTES

Discovery and Exploration of the Yukon

1 Clarence C. Hulley, Alaska: Past and Present (Portland: Binfords and Mort, 1970), pp. 43-53. Vitus Bering was appointed commander of the First Kamchatka Expedition in 1724 to determine the nature of the connection, if any, between Russia and America. The expedition crossed Siberia to the Kamchatka River, constructed the ship Gabriel, and set sail in 1728. Less than one month out of port, sailing north along th Siberian coast, it swung abruptly to the west. Bering continued north to 67 degrees, 18 minutes north latitude and returned to Kamchatka convinced he had completed his mission. The following year, Bering sailed east toward America but was forced to abandon the voyage before he had sighted land. The inconclusive findings of Bering's expedition and the news of the discovery of a large land mass east of Russia damaged Bering's reputation. He fell from favour with the government.

A change in the mood of the government was eventually effected and Bering was given command of the Second Kamchatka Expedition. In 1741 two ships, the St. Paul commanded by Lieutenant Chirikof and the St. Peter commanded by Bering, left the Russian coast. Bering and Chirikof were soon separated. Chirikof sighted land in the Alexander Archipelago and found Sitka harbour in July 1741, but after losing a number of men and both his long-boats, he returned to Russia without sighting Vitus Bering and the St. Peter. Meanwhile, and Bering had sailed northeast, sighting and naming Mount St. Elias. On the long voyage homeward, the expedition, hampered by storms and fog and suffering from scurvy, was forced to land on a small unnamed island where they spent the winter of 1741-42. Bering died and was buried on the island, later named for him. The crew returned to Russia in a makeshift ship constructed from the wreckage of the St. Peter with a cargo of valuable sea otter and other furs.

2 Pierre Berton, Klondike: The Last Great Gold Rush 1896 - 1899 Revised edition (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), p. 4. Count Alexander Baranov was not anxious for a gold rush and Berton promulgates the legend that the drunken babbling about gold by a Russian solicited the death penalty from the Count as head of the Russian American Company.

3 George M. Dawson, Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District, N.W.T. and Adjacent Northern Portion of British Columbia, 1897 (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1898), p. 14. The Russians called the river the Kwikhpak, a name in use during the 1830s for the lower river. It was superceded by the name Yukon, applied to the river at its confluence with the Porcupine River by John Bell of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1846.

4 Svetlana G. Fedorova, The Russian Population in Alaska and California, Late 18th Century - 1867 (Kingston, Ontario: Limestone Press, 1973), p. 141.

5 L.A. Zagoskin, Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels in Russian America 1842 - 44 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967).

6 Kalervo Oberg, The social economy of the Tlingit Indians (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973), p. 105.

7 "One evening early in August, when a good many of these local Indians were about us, we heard a noise of shouting & singing up the Lewes. The Indians explained to us as best they could who the strangers were (they were Chilcats) [sic]...The Chilcats" belong to the Coast Indians along Lynn Canal, who had long carried on a bartering trade with the Indians in that quarter; & the only articles from the outside world - indifferent though they were in quality - these poor Indians had ever obtained in trade came from the Chilcats"(Campbell wrote this in the summer of 1848. Quoted in A. Wright, Prelude to Bonanza [Sidney, British Columbia: Gray's Publishing, 1976], p. 61, from Robert Campbell, Two Journals of Robert Campbell [Seattle: John W. Todd Jr., 1951], pp. 82-83).

8 Yukon Archives, Manuscript Coll., Box XI, F, 10, Michael S. Gates, Analysis of Coastal - Interior Trading Relationships in Northwest America, p. 7.

9 Ibid., p. 9.

10 Kalervo Oberg, op. cit., p. 108.

11 George M. Dawson, op. cit., pp. 14-17. Robert Campbell, entering the Yukon country from the west, descended a river he named the Pelly River to its confluence with a smaller river which flowed in from the south, which he named the Lewes River. He later found the Lewes River to be the same river John Bell had named the Yukon River. The latter nomenclature eventually superceded that of Campbell. George Dawson details the confusion resultant from the exploration of the river by Bell, Campbell and many subsequent mapmakers.

12 Quoted in A. Wright, op. cit., p. 71, from a letter from James Anderson to Donald Ross, Red River Settlement, dated at Fort Simpson, 11 March 1852. James Anderson bemoans the dismal state of affairs at Campbell's Fort Selkirk. The Chilkats had "swept off everything" and to add insult to injury, the Chilkats continually undersold the Hudson's Bay Company. The post was difficult to supply, accounts were not kept, discipline was lax and the returns were "disheartening." Anderson advised the abandonment of the site in favour of a location further down the Yukon out of the sphere of influence of the Chilkats.

13 A. Krause, The Tlingit Indians (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1956), p. 137. Krause observed that during the winter of 1881-82, a band of Athabascan Indians came through the passes with loads of furs for trade. The Chilkats were very careful to allow only one Athabascan, a blood relative of one of the Chilkat chiefs, to trade with the white traders, thus maintaining their position as middlemen.

14 George M. Dawson, op. cit., pp. 14-17. Dawson outlines the confusing situation regarding the nomenclature of the Yukon, Pelly

and Lewes rivers resultant from the explorations of Robert Campbell and John Bell on published maps.

15 A. Wright, op. cit., p. 41.

16 George M. Dawson, op. cit., p. 15.

17 Ibid.

18 A. Wright, op. cit., p. 59.

19 Ibid., p. 61.

20 Ibid., pp. 62, 64. Campbell was gratified to learn that the message was delivered to Captain Dodd on the Pacific coast. The governor of the Russian American Company at Sitka was notified and instructions were given to the company's trading post personnel to make Campbell and his fellows welcome should they arrive.

21 Quoted in A. Wright, op. cit., p. 69, from Robert Campbell, op. cit., pp. 96-98.

22 A. Wright, op. cit., p. 70.

23 Ibid., pp. 70-71.

24 Pierre Berton, op. cit., p. 4.

25 Quoted, but not identified, in William Ogilvie, Early Days on the Yukon (Ottawa: Thornburn & Abbott, 1913), p. 86.

26 A. Wright, op. cit., p. 123.

27 Ibid., p. 127.

28 Ibid., p. 123.

29 According to A. Krause, op. cit., p. 137, the Chilkat tribe of the Tlingit used the Chilkat Pass some distance to the west of the Chilkoot Pass. The Chilkoot tribe of the Tlingit Indians used the Chilkoot Pass exclusively. It is possible that the letter Campbell entrusted to the Chilkat Indians in 1848 was carried to the coast via the Chilkat Pass in the light of Krause's observations. The existing references to the use of the passes by the respective Indian groups are confusing as the terms "Chilkat" and "Chilkoot" are often used to refer to the Tlingit at the head of Lynn Canal in general.

30 A. Wright, op. cit., p. 133.

31 L.A. Beardslee, Reports of Captain L.A. Beardslee, U.S. Navy, Relative to Affairs in Alaska (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1882), p. 60.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., p. 64. The firing of the Gatling gun to impress the Indians, a form of gunboat diplomacy, is an interesting question. The only primary source available to the author, an excerpt from the report of Lieutenant E.P. McClelland published in Beardslee's Report, would indicate that the Chilkat chief, Klotz-Kutch, was more concerned with adding the white miners to his "kinfolk" group rather than the might of the United States Navy.

34 Ibid., p. 65.

35 Clarence C. Hulley, op. cit., p. 225.

36 George M. Dawson, op. cit., p. 180.

37 A. Wright, op. cit., p. 137.

38 George M. Dawson, op. cit., p. 180.

39 A. Wright, op. cit., p. 137.

40 William H. Dall, Alaska and Its Resources (Boston: Lee and Sheppard, 1870).

41 Ibid., map "Alaska and Adjoining Territory."

42 Ibid., p. 429.
43 Ibid., p. 271.
44 A. Krause, op. cit., originally published in German, but he also published papers dealing with his work in the northwest Pacific in contemporary scientific journals.
45 George M. Dawson, op. cit., p. 180.
46 Morgan B. Sherwood, Exploration of Alaska 1865 - 1900 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 77.
47 Quoted in Morgan B. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 100.
48 Frederick Schwatka, Along Alaska's Great River (New York: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1895), p. 62.
49 Edwin C. Bearss, Proposed Klondike Gold Rush National History Park, Historic Resource Study (Washington, D.C.: Office of Historic Architecture, National Park Service, 1970), p. 13.
50 Schwatka ignored the existing name, Chilkoot Pass, and named the pass for Colonel J. Perrier of the French Geographical Society. The name was generally accepted.
51 Frederick Schwatka, op. cit., pp. 83-84.
52 Ibid., p. 88.
53 Ibid., p. 90.
54 Ibid., p. 95.
55 Ibid., pp. 95-96.
56 Schwatka named the short river joining Lakes Lindeman and Bennett "Payer Rapids" and the trail around them "Payer Portage" after Lieutenant Payer of the Austro-Hungarian expedition of 1872-74.
57 Schwatka named the "bold range" of mountains the "Iron-capped Mountains" which does not appear on modern topographic maps on which they are named the Bennett Range. Bennett Lake he named for Mr. James Gordon Bennett, a well-known patron of American geographical research.
58 Frederick Schwatka, op. cit., p. 105.
59 Ibid., p. 110. Nares Lake was named for Sir George Nares.
60 Ibid., p. 114. The name chosen by Schwatka for the large lake, Bove Lake, after his acquaintance Lieutenant Bove of the Italian Navy, was later relegated to the island at the mouth of Windy Arm by George M. Dawson. Dawson renamed the lake Tagish Lake, for the local Indians.
61 Tagish River, the nine-mile river joining Tagish Lake and Marsh Lake, was left unnamed by Schwatka. Taku Arm, spelled "Tahko" by Schwatka, was an application of the Indian name for the 60-mile long lake extending south from Tagish Lake into northern British Columbia.
62 Marsh Lake was named for Professor O.C. Marsh of the United States. The lake was called "Mud" Lake by the miners because of the shallowness of the water. Its present name, Marsh Lake, is often thought to be of the same derivation.
63 Schwatka identified the river flowing out of Marsh Lake as the Yukon River when in fact Robert Campbell had previously named it the Lewes River. Before Schwatka's passage, the name Yukon had referred to the river below its confluence with the Pelly. Schwatka's choice endured despite the objection of such authorities as George M. Dawson. During the gold rush, the term Lewes River was often used on published maps.

64 Frederick Schwatka, op. cit., p. 165.
65 Ibid., p. 166.
66 Ibid., and by the same author, A Summer in Alaska (St. Louis: J.W. Henry, 1894).
67 George M. Dawson, op. cit., p. 6.
68 William Ogilvie, Information respecting the Yukon district from Reports of W. Ogilvie (D.L.S.) and from other sources (Ottawa: Dept. of the Interior, 1897), p. 11.
69 "The Indians are perfectly heartless. They will not render even the smallest aid to each other without payment; and if not to each other, much less to a white man. I got one of them, whom I had previously assisted with his pack, to take me and two of my party over a small creek in his canoe. After putting us across he asked for money, and I gave him half a dollar. Another man stepped up and demanded pay, stating that the canoe was his. To see what the result would be, I gave to him the same amount as to the first. Immediately there were three or four more claimants for the canoe. I dismissed them with a blessing, and made up my mind that I would wade the next creek." (Ibid., p. 11.)
70 Ibid., p. 12.
71 Ibid., p. 14.
72 Ibid. Ogilvie determined the elevation of Lake Lindeman, from readings of a hand held aneroid, at 1237 feet below the summit of the Chilkoot Pass. Calculation of the elevation from measured angles of depression fixed it at 1354 feet below the summit. The difference of 117 feet he attributed to the "altitude of the place, the sudden changes in temperature, and the atmospheric conditions."
73 Ibid., p. 12.
74 A. Wright, op. cit., p. 190.
75 William Ogilvie, Information op. cit., p. 12.
76 Ibid., p. 14.
77 Ibid., p. 15.
78 A. Wright, op. cit., p. 198.
79 William Ogilvie, Information op. cit., pp. 51-54.

Gold in the Yukon, 1887-96

1 A. Wright, Prelude to Bonanza (Sidney, British Columbia: Gray's Publishing, 1976), p. 161.
2 William Ogilvie, Early Days on the Yukon (Ottawa: Thornburn & Abbott, 1913), p. 108.
3 Ibid., p. 111.
4 Ibid., p. 112.
5 Ibid.
6 A. Wright, op. cit., p. 247.
7 William Ogilvie, op. cit., p. 113.
8 A. Wright, op. cit., p. 267.
9 A. Walden, A Dog Puncher on the Yukon (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), p. 6.
10 William Ogilvie, op. cit., p. 124.
11 Ibid., pp. 115-134. This version of the controversial Klondike gold discovery is taken from William Ogilvie's narrative in Early Days on

the Yukon. Ogilvie, with his meticulous attention to detail, procured, through personal interviews with all the participants, a convincing bank of evidence. He finds in favour of Bob Henderson as the discoverer of the Klondike as it was his initial exploration and discovery that generated George Carmack's interests, as well as others who prospected the creeks in July and August of 1896. Ironically events as they unfolded left Henderson unrewarded with an "ordinary sized claim while the disinterested part-time miner Carmack did very well on his double-sized discovery claim."

12 William Ogilvie, Information respecting the Yukon District from reports to W. Ogilvie (D.L.S.) and from other sources (Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1897), p. 58.

13 Canada, Parliament, "Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force, Appendix DD, Report on the Yukon Detachment," in Sessional Papers, 1897 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1897), p. 234.

14 William Ogilvie, Information respecting the Yukon District op. cit., p. 55.

15 Ibid., pp. 55-56.

16 Ibid., p. 58.

17 Pierre Berton, Klondike; The Last Great Gold Rush 1896-1899 Revised edition (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), p. 90.

18 Quoted in Pierre Berton, Klondike op. cit., p. 98, from the Post Intelligencer (Seattle), 17 July 1897.

19 Quoted in Pierre Berton, Klondike op. cit., p. 101, from the Herald (New York), 15 July 1897.

20 Pierre Berton, Klondike op. cit., p. 105.

21 Edwin C. Bearss, Proposed Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Historic Resource Study (Washington, D.C.: Office of Historic Architecture, National Parks Service, 1970), p. 50.

22 Conkey Company, Official guide to the Klondyke country and the gold fields of Alaska (Chicago: Wabash Publishing House, 1897).

23 Chicago Record, Klondike, The Chicago Record's book for gold seekers (Toronto: Wm. Briggs, c. 1897).

24 Conkey Company, op. cit., p. 30.

25 William Ogilvie, The Klondike Official Guide (Toronto: The Hunter Rose Co. Ltd., 1898), p. 136.

26 Pierre Berton, Klondike op. cit., p. 190.

27 Ibid., p. 137.

28 Ibid., pp. 201-4.

29 Ibid., pp. 205-7.

30 Joseph Ladue, Klondyke Facts (New York: American Technical Book Co., 1897), p. 30.

31 Tappan Adney, The Klondike Stampede of 1897-98 (New York: Ye Galleon Press, 1968), pp. 17-18.

32 Canada. Parliament, "Report of the North-West Mounted Police 1898, Part II, Instructions to, and diary of Inspector J.D. Moodie in charge of patrol from Edmonton to the Yukon, 1897," in Sessional Papers, 1899 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1899).

33 Pierre Berton, Klondike op. cit., p. 208.

34 British Columbia Provincial Archives, Manuscript Collection, Norman Lee, "A Klondike Tragedy of '98," n.d.

The Gold Rush Trail, 1896-97

1 William Ogilvie, The Klondike Official Guide (Toronto: The Hunter Rose Co. Ltd., 1898), p. 115.

2 Pierre Berton, Klondike; The Last Great Gold Rush 1896 - 1899 Revised edition (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), p. 239.

3 Ibid.

4 Edwin C. Bearss, Proposed Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Historic Resource Study (Washington, D.C.: Office of Historic Architecture, National Park Service, 1970), p. 53.

5 William Ogilvie, op. cit., p. 115.

6 Ibid., p. 116.

7 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 53.

8 William Ogilvie, op. cit., p. 116.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p. 117.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Quoted in Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 108, from Post-Intelligencer (Seattle), 13 October 1897.

15 "Mssrs. Healy & Wilson, traders at Dyea, some years ago cut a pack trail from their post to Sheep Camp. This is now in a fair state for that country. What rights they claim on it I do not know, but I have not heard of their interfering with the public use of it, at least as far as miners are concerned." (William Ogilvie, op. cit., p. 116.)

16 Pierre Berton, op. cit., p. 135. On July 26, 1897 the eager Captain William Moore was inundated by the rush for gold. The mass of humanity ignored his claims of a 160-acre homestead. Moore's protests went unheeded by the new citizens of Skagway. A resort to court action took four years to award him 25 per cent of the assessed value of the town lots which fell within the boundaries of the original homestead. Financially, Moore did not suffer from the rush as the income from the wharf he had constructed made him a wealthy man.

17 William Ogilvie, op. cit., p. 114.

18 Quoted in Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 83, from Post-Intelligencer (Seattle), 13 October 1897.

19 William Ogilvie, op. cit., p. 115.

20 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 83.

21 William Ogilvie, op. cit., p. 115.

22 The nomenclature of this part of the country had not been finalized and many miners and travellers still referred to the river which flowed out of Marsh Lake as far as the Pelly River confluence by Robert Campbell's name for it. The name Lewes River appears in a great many published personal accounts and the accompanying maps and photographs.

23 Arthur T. Walden, A Dog Puncher on the Yukon (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), p. 3.

24 Ibid., p. 4.

25 Ibid., p. 8.

26 Ibid., p. 20.

27 Ibid.

28 Walden's book was not published until 1928 and in many cases it would appear that the chronology is open to suspicion. In 1897 pilots were most definitely available but it is uncertain whether or not the traffic in the spring of 1896 induced the development of a pilotage service. Walden is the only one of the very few pre-rush goldseekers who mentions the pilots operating as early as the spring of 1896.

29 Josiah E. Spurr, *Through the Yukon Gold Diggings, a narrative of personal travel* (Boston: Eastern Publishing, 1900), p. 25.

30 Ibid., pp. 23-25.

31 Ibid., pp. 39-40.

32 Ibid., p. 41.

33 Ibid., p. 42.

34 Ibid., p. 73.

35 Ibid., p. 81.

36 Ibid., pp. 91-92.

37 Ibid., p. 94.

38 It is noteworthy that the Secretan group left Ottawa early in 1897 well before news of the gold aboard the *Portland* and *Excelsior* had been broadcast across the country, and that they were knowledgeable about the Klondike gold fields.

39 J.H.E. Secretan, *To Klondyke and Back* (London: Hurst and Blacett, 1898), pp. 34-35.

40 Ibid., p. 26.

41 Ibid., p. 41.

42 Ibid., p. 43.

43 Ibid., p. 48.

44 This is apparently an innocent and harmless amusement, but it leads to suicide or insanity. One man stands on top of the log and the other below, the saw is then pushed up and down along a chalk mark until the lower operators lungs are filled with sawdust, when the work has to stop. (An interesting and revealing, if hyperbolic description of whipsawing. Ibid., p. 63.)

45 Ibid., pp. 64-65.

46 Ibid., p. 71.

47 Ibid., pp. 86-88.

48 Ibid., p. 83.

49 Ibid., p. 91.

50 Edward B. Lung, *Black Sand and Gold, as told to Ella Lung Martinsen* (New York: Vintage Press, 1956), pp. 13-20.

51 Ibid., p. 22.

52 Ibid., p. 37.

53 Ibid., p. 38.

54 Ibid., p. 43. Lung and his partner were able to shoot the river known as "One Mile River" by the miners, while later in the rush boats were generally "lined" through. Perhaps the higher water of spring made the rapids less dangerous.

55 Ibid., p. 64.

56 Ibid., p. 65.

57 Ibid., pp. 66-67.

58 Robert C. Kirk, Twelve Months in the Klondike (London: William Heineman, 1899), pp. 28-32.
59 Tappan Adney, The Klondike Stampede of 1897-98 (New York: Ye Galleon Press, 1968), p. 34.
60 Ibid., p. 35.
61 Ibid., p. 38.
62 Ibid., p. 41.
63 Ibid., p. 44.
64 Ibid., p. 46.
65 Ibid., p. 48.
66 Ibid., p. 74.
67 Ibid., p. 76.
68 Ibid., p. 83.
69 Ibid., p. 99.
70 Ibid., p. 107.
71 Ibid., p. 109.
72 Ibid., p. 114.
73 Ibid., pp. 112-14.
74 Ibid., p. 115.
75 Ibid., pp. 117-18.
76 Ibid., p. 19.
77 Ibid., p. 120.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., pp. 121-24.
80 Canada. Parliament, "Return to address of the Senate dated the 17th March, 1898, for copies of all letters and reports received by the Government or any departments thereof, from Commissioner Walsh, while on his way to the Yukon District," in Sessinal Papers, 1898 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1898), p. 11.
81 Ibid., p. 13.

The North West Mounted Police Force in the Yukon

1 Bishop William Carpenter Bompas was appointed the first bishop of the most remote Anglican Diocese of Selkirk (later renamed Yukon) in the Yukon territory in 1892. The Bishop arrived in Forty Mile on August 4, 1892.
2 Canada. Public Archives (hereafter cited as PAC), RG18, Vol. 89, file 97-94, Deputy Superintendent-General Indian Affairs to White, 26 August 1893.
3 PAC, RG18, Vol. 89, file 97-94, Bompas to Deputy Superintendent-General Indian Affairs, 9 May 1893.
4 PAC, RG18, Vol. 89, file 97-94, "Report of a Committee to the Privy Council, 29 November 1893."
5 PAC, RG18, Vol. 89, file 97-94, "An Ordinance To Further Amend The Liquor License Ordinance, 1891-92," 16 Sept. 1893.
6 PAC, RG18, Vol. 100, file 17-95, "Report of a Committee of the Privy Council," 26 May 1894. Inspector Charles Constantine appointed Commissioner of Police in the Northwest Territories.
7 Ibid.
8 Samuel B. Steele, Forty Years in Canada (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1815), p. 288. Steele suggests Ottawa was also moved by the

complaints about the arbitrary actions of the miners' committees from the North American Trading and Transportation Company.

9 Canada. Parliament, "Annual Report of Inspector C. Constantine, Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force, 1894," (hereafter cited as Constantine 1894), in Sessional Papers, 1895 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1895), p. 70.

10 Ibid., p. 71.

11 Ibid., p. 76.

12 Ibid., p. 71.

13 Ibid., p. 77.

14 Ibid., p. 80.

15 Ibid., p. 81.

16 Ibid., p. 77.

17 Ibid., p. 75.

18 Ibid., pp. 78-79.

19 Ibid., p. 81.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., p. 82.

22 Ibid., p. 83.

23 Ibid., p. 77.

24 Ibid., pp. 81-83.

25 Ibid., pp. 84-85.

26 PAC, RG18, Vol. 100, file 17-95, White to Kilvet, 22 March 1895.

27 PAC, RG18, Vol. 100, file 17-95, Brown to Constantine, 9 Feb. 1895.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 PAC, RG18, Vol. 100, file 17-95, Brown to Constantine, 20 June 1895.

31 PAC, RG18, Vol. 100, file 17-95, Circular Memo No. III, from the Office of the Commissioner to all Divisions, 29 April 1895.

32 Ibid.

33 PAC, RG18, Vol. 100, file 17-95, Herchmer to White, 25 May 1895.

34 Ibid.

35 Canada. Parliament, "Supplementary Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force 1895," (hereafter cited as Constantine 1895), in Sessional Papers, 1896 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1896), p. 7.

36 Ibid., p. 8.

37 Ibid., p. 7.

38 Ibid., pp. 10-14.

39 Canada. Parliament, "Report on the Yukon Detachment, Appendix DD, Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force, 1896," (hereafter cited as Constantine, 1896), in Sessional Papers, 1897 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1897), p. 232.

40 Samuel B. Steele, op. cit., p. 288.

41 Constantine 1894, op. cit., p. 82; Constantine 1895, op. cit., p.13.

42 Constantine 1896, op. cit.

43 Canada. Parliament, "Annual Report of Superintendent C. Constantine, Commanding Yukon District, 1897, Appendix LL, Report of the Commissioner of North-West Mounted Police, 1897," (hereafter

cited as Constantine 1897), in Sessional Papers, 1898 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer 1898), p. 308.
44 Constantine 1896, op. cit., p. 233.
45 Constantine 1894, op. cit., p. 12; Constantine 1895, op. cit., p.82.
46 Constantine 1896, op. cit., p. 236.
47 Constantine 1897, op. cit., p. 307.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., p. 309.
50 Ibid., pp. 307, 310.
51 PAC, RG18, Vol. 135, file 211-97, McIllree to Herchmer, 20 May 1897.
52 Canada. Parliament, "Report of Trip To the Yukon by Inspector W.H. Scarth, Appendix K, Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force, 1898," in Sessional Papers, 1898 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1898), p. 147.
53 Ibid., p. 150.
54 Ibid., pp. 154-55.
55 PAC, RG18, Vol. 210, file 309-01, Report of North-West Mounted Police strength in the North-West Territories and Yukon from 1894 to April 1898.
56 PAC, RG18, Vol. 137, file 360-97, Hamilton to Weare, 30 April 1897.
57 PAC, RG18, Vol. 137, file 372-97, McIllree to Herchmer, 22 May 1897.
58 Canada. Parliament, "Extracts From Reports of Thos. Fawcett, D.T.S. Gold Commissioner for the Yukon District," in Sessional Papers, 1898 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1898), p. 74.
59 PAC, RG18, Vol. 139, file 442-97 Part I, memo. White to Sifton, 21 July 1897.
60 Ibid., "Arrangement regarding the Yukon Territory," 27 July 1897.
61 Ibid., "Extract from a report of the Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency on 29th July, 1897."
62 Ibid., telegram White to Herchmer, 2 Aug. 1897; Ibid., Circular Memo No. 249, McIllree to all Commanding Officers.
63 PAC, RG18, Vol. 139, file 442-97 Part II, "Men of the Yukon Detachment"; PAC, RG 18, Vol. 210, file 309-01, "North-West Mounted Police Strength from 1894."
64 PAC, RG18, Vol. 139, file 432-97 Part I, McIllree to Herchmer, 2 Sept. 1897.
65 PAC, RG18, Vol. 139, file 442-97 Part II, "Men of the Yukon Detachment."
66 Constantine 1897, op. cit., p. 308.
67 Canada. Parliament, "Annual Report of Inspector D'A.E. Strickland, Appendix F, Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police, 1898," (hereafter cited as Strickland 1898), in Sessional Papers, 1899 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1899), p. 80. Inspector Strickland's report begins by indicating that he left Vancouver on August 21, 1898 via Skagway to Tagish Post. The date is obviously wrong, possibly a printing error. Letters from Strickland to Herchmer (PAC, RG18, Vol. 139, file 432-97) indicate that he was at Tagish Post at least by October 1897. Thus the chain of events in

his report dated October 31, 1898 cover a period from August 1897 to October 1898 and not as printed.

68 Ibid., pp. 80-81.

69 Ibid., p. 82.

70 PAC, RG18, Vol. 139, file 432-97, Strickland to Herchmer, 30 Oct. 1897.

71 Ibid.

72 Strickland 1898, op. cit., p. 82.

73 J.W. Dafoe, Clifford Sifton in Relation to His Times (Toronto: MacMillan, 1931), p. 156.

74 Ibid., p. 156; Samuel B. Steele, op. cit., p. 290.

75 J.W. Dafoe, op. cit., pp. 157-59.

76 Canada. Parliament, "Instructions to, and diary of, Inspector J.D. Moodie in charge of patrol from Edmonton to the Yukon, 1897, Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force, 1898, Part II," in Sessional Papers, 1899 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer); Canada. Parliament, "A. St. Cyr, D.L.S. Exploration of Country between Stikine River and mouth of Teslin River," in Sessional Papers, 1898 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1898).

77 Canada. Parliament, "Return of an address of the Senate dated 17th March, 1898, for copies of all letters and reports received by the Government or any departments thereof, from Commissioner Walsh, while on his way to the Yukon District," (hereafter cited as Commissioner Walsh's Report, 1897), in Sessional Papers, 1898 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1898), p. 21.

78 Strickland 1898, op. cit., p. 82.

79 Commissioner Walsh's Report, 1897, op. cit., p. 22.

80 William R. Morrison, "The Mounted Police on Canada's northern frontier, 1895-1940," (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 1973), p. 58. Constantine's requests for additional manpower and the rush of 1897-98 overcame the inertia of government inaction and reinforcements flowed into the Yukon and by the end of the rush, the flow continued as a result of the built-up momentum. The 300-man maximum was reached in 1903 when the Yukon's population had decreased as had criminal activity.

81 PAC, RG18, Vol. 141, file 626-97, Herchmer to Constantine, 7 Feb. 1898; William Morrison, op. cit., pp. 98-117.

82 Pierre Berton, Klondike; The Last Great Gold Rush, 1896 - 99 (Toronto:McClelland and Stewart, 1972), pp. 160-64.

83 Commissioner Walsh's Report, 1897, op. cit., p. 21.

84 Ibid., p. 23.

85 Ibid., pp. 25-30.

86 Canada. Parliament, "Report of Major J. Walsh, Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Year 1898," (hereafter cited as Commissioner Walsh's Report, 1898), in Sessional Papers, 1899 (Ottawa:Queen's Printer, 1899).

87 Ibid., pp. 30-31; Samuel B. Steele, op. cit., p. 295.

88 Commissioner Walsh's Report, 1898, op. cit., p. 31.

89 United States Senate, "Relief of the Destitute in Gold Fields" by Capt. D.H. Ray in Compilation of Narratives of Explorations in Alaska Report No. 1023 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900).

90 Canada. Parliament, "Annual Report of Superintendent Z.T. Wood, Appendix A, Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force, 1898," (hereafter cited as Wood 1898), in Sessional Papers, 1899 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1899), p. 31.

91 Strickland 1898, op. cit., p. 82.

92 Canada. Parliament, "Annual Report of Inspector Belcher, Appendix G, Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force, 1898," (hereafter cited as Belcher 1898), in Sessional Papers, 1899 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1899), pp. 88-89.

93 Strickland 1898, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

94 Belcher 1898, op. cit., p. 88.

95 Ibid., pp. 89-90.

96 Ibid., p. 89.

97 Ibid., p. 93.

98 Ibid., pp. 93-94; Samuel B. Steele, op. cit., p. 298.

99 J.W. Dafoe, op. cit., pp. 214-15.

100 Edgar McInnis, Canada; A Political and Social History (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1947), pp. 467-469.

The Gold Rush, 1898-99

1 Edwin C. Bearss, Proposed Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Historic Resource Study (Washington, D.C.: Office of Historic Architecture, National Park Service, 1970), p. 107.

2 Ibid.; Pierre Berton, Klondike; The Last Great Gold Rush 1896-99 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), p. 237. Berton indicates that "as much as eight million board feet of lumber" were unloaded in a single day by ships such as the Colorado.

3 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 108; Pierre Berton, op. cit., p. 237.

4 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., pp. 105-6.

5 Ibid., p. 95.

6 Alexander Macdonald, In Search of El-dorado, A Wanderer's Experiences (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905), p. 3.

7 Pierre Berton, op. cit., pp. 150-54; Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., pp. 182-97.

8 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 181.

9 Pierre Berton, op. cit., pp. 338-49.

10 Canada. Parliament, "Report of Superintendent S.B. Steele Commanding North-West Mounted Police in the Yukon Territory, Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force, 1898," (hereafter cited as Steele 1898), in Sessional Papers, 1899 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1899), p. 4.

11 Samuel B. Steele, Forty Years in Canada (New York: Dodd Mead, 1915), p. 296.

12 Ibid., p. 297; Steele 1898, op. cit., p. 4.

13 Samuel B. Steele, op. cit., p. 299.

14 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 123.

15 Pierre Berton, op. cit., p. 247.

16 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 127.

17 Ibid.; Pierre Berton, op. cit., p. 247. Berton and Bearss appear to differ on the description of the Alaska Railway and Transportation Company and the Dyea-Klondike Transportation Company, which are the reverse of each other. Berton's description is undocumented while

Bearss relies on the Dyea Trail "Chilkoot Pass Special Illustrated Edition," published in August 1898.

18 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 127.

19 Ibid., pp. 123-27.

20 Ibid., pp. 126-27.

21 Ibid., p. 128.

22 Pierre Berton, op. cit., p. 247.

23 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 128.

24 Canada. Parliament, "Annual Report of Inspector Belcher, Appendix G, Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force, 1898," (hereafter cited as Belcher 1898), in Sessional Papers, 1899 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1899), p. 90.

25 Ibid.

26 The exact number of dead in the snowslide of April 3, 1898 was never determined. The Dyea Trail of April 16, 1898 listed the names of 49 dead while Inspector Belcher (Belcher 1898, op. cit.) reported to Ottawa that 53 died, the bodies of two of whom were not found until later in the spring. Generally, a number of about 50 is given by most personal accounts.

27 Belcher 1898, op. cit., p. 90.

28 Samuel B. Steele, op. cit., p. 309.

29 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 121.

30 Ibid., pp. 121-22.

31 Ibid., pp. 200-210.

32 Ibid., p. 206.

33 W.A. Croffert, "A Railroad to the Yukon," Leslie's Monthly, Vol. 49 (April 1900), p. 648.

34 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., pp. 210-11.

35 W.A. Croffert, op. cit., p. 650.

36 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., pp. 223-27.

37 Quoted but not identified in J.W. Dafoe, Clifford Sifton in Relation to His Times (Toronto: Macmillan, 1931), p. 164. Walsh refers to Port Simpson at the mouth of Dixon Entrance immediately south of the Alaska Panhandle.

38 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., pp. 223-27.

39 W.A. Croffert, op. cit., p. 657.

40 Gordon Bennett, Yukon Transportation: A History (unpublished manuscript); Kathryn Winslow, Big Pan-Out - The Story of the Klondike Gold Rush (New York: W.W. Norton, 1951), pp. 62-63; Robert C. Kirk, Twelve Months in the Klondike (London: William Heinemann, 1899), p. 207.

41 G.P. de T. Glazebrook, A History of Transportation in Canada (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1933), p. XV; O.D. Skelton, The Railway Builders (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1922), p. 240.

42 Gordon Bennett, op. cit., p. 67; Robert Dorman (comp.), A Statutory History of the Steam and Electric Railways of Canada 1836 - 1937 (Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1938). Most of the railroads incorporated to run lines into the Yukon, with the exception of the W.P. & Y.R., existed in name only until they were declared dissolved in 1926-27.

43 Gordon Bennett, op. cit., p. 68.

44 Robert Dorman, op. cit., p. 59.

45 Ibid., Gordon Bennett, op. cit., p. 69; Cy Warman, "Building a Railroad into the Klondike," McClure, Vol. 14 (March 1900), p. 419.

46 Gordon Bennett, op. cit., pp. 69-70; Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 225. On May 14, 1898 President William McKinley signed the act "Extending the Homestead Law and Providing for Rights-of-Way for Railroads in the District of Alaska." This completed the charters that were necessary to complete the chain of rights-of-way through Alaska, British Columbia, and the Provisional District of the Yukon.

47 Canada. Parliament, "Report on Routes to the Yukon," in Sessional Papers, 1898 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1898). A series of surveys examined the possible railway routes from the Pacific coast from the mouth of the Stikine and Taku rivers inland to the headwaters of Teslin River. The Teslin River was also examined for its suitability for a navigational link with the Yukon River. The Chilkoot, Chilkat and White passes were also surveyed but the final choice for the "all-Canadian" route was the Stikine River route.

48 J.W. Dafoe, op. cit., p. 168.

49 Ibid., pp. 165-72.

50 Ibid., p. 171.

51 Gordon Bennett, op. cit., pp. 70-71.

52 S.H. Graves, On the "White Pass" Pay Roll (New York: Paladin Press, 1970), p. 15; Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., pp. 251-52; Gordon Bennett, op. cit., pp. 70-71.

53 Cy Warman, op. cit., pp. 420-21; Gordon Bennett, op. cit., p. 74.

54 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 255; N. Thompson and J.H. Edgar, Canadian Railway Development (Toronto: Macmillan, 1933), pp. 322-23. Beginning on April 10, 1898, five separate surveys were run over the summit and subsequently synthesized to determine the route of the White Pass and Yukon Route.

55 Gordon Bennett, op. cit., p. 74.

56 S.H. Graves, op. cit., p. 16.

57 N. Thompson and J.H. Edgar, op. cit., p. 327.

58 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., pp. 261-62.

59 Cy Warman, op. cit., p. 424; N. Thompson and J.H. Edgar, op. cit., p. 325; S.H. Graves, op. cit., p. 61.

60 Yukon Archives, RG1, Box 1 uncatalogued series, Gray to Hawkins, 15 May 1899.

61 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., pp. 265-66.

62 Yukon Archives, Manuscript Collection, Robert C. Coutts, The Yukon Remembers: A Search Into the Origin and History of Some Place Names in the Yukon Territory, unpublished manuscript dated December 1976, Atlin, British Columbia, p. 56. The narrows between Bennett and Nares lakes was known as Caribou Crossing by the earliest miners because the migrating herds of caribou crossed the narrows twice a year. The settlement that resulted from the gold rush was renamed Carcross, a shortened version of the original name, at the request of Bishop Bompas in 1903, to avoid confusion in the mail service due to the common occurence of Caribou as a place name in the Northwest. The W.P. & Y.R. did not change.

63 Ibid., p. 339. The name of the settlement that grew up at the end of steel of the W.P. & Y.R. was initially named Closeleigh for the Close brothers, financial backers for the railroad, but George M. Dawson overruled that application, reverting to White Horse after the famous rapids. The spelling was later changed to Whitehorse.

64 University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library, Bennett Lake an Klondyke Navigation Company Ltd. Records, 1898-1903, Microfilm Z-G1, Reel 235 part 4.

65 Ibid.

66 British Columbia, Provincial Archives, Manuscript Collection, W.H.T. Olive, Trail of '98, unpublished manuscript (hereafter cited as W.H.T Olive). Mr. W.H.T. Olive was an employee of the Bennett Lake and Klondyke Navigation Company.

67 Ibid., pp. 55-59.

68 Ibid., p. 67.

69 Ibid., p. 88.

70 Yukon Archives, Yukon Territorial Records, Crown Timber Agent Letterbook, 1899-1900 (hereafter cited as Crown Timber Agent Letterbook), Millar to Secretary, Department of the Interior, 28 December 1899.

71 Ibid., Millar to Secretary, Department of the Interior, 12 May 1900.

72 Ibid., Millar to Secretary, Department of the Interior, 12 July 1900.

73 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 218.

74 W.H.T. Olive, op. cit., pp. 149-50.

75 The distinction of first steamer on the upper Yukon River or that portion of the river above the White Horse Rapids has many contenders Tappan Adney, The Klondike Stampede of 1897-98 (New York: Ye Galleon Press, 1968), p. 390, indicates the first steamboat was a small propeller-driven craft named the Sea Witch, which was hauled over the Chilkoot Pass and run down to Fort Cudahy in 1895. Supported by Pierre Berton, op. cit., p. 284, Tappan Adney, op. cit., p. 389, then says the Bellingham built at Lake Bennett was the first boat on the upper river. Katherine Winslow, Big Pan-Out (New York: W.W. Norton, 1951), p. 138, credits the A.J. Goddard and the J.H. Kilbourne with the feat, while other sources add to the list.

76 W.H.T. Olive, op. cit., pp. 150-72.
The first trip of the steamer Ora was a sensational event and is described in detail from sliding off the ways on Lake Bennett to shooting the White Horse Rapids.

77 Katherine Winslow, op. cit., p. 138.

78 W.H.T. Olive, op. cit., p. 215; Kathryn Winslow, op. cit., p. 138.

79 W.H. McCurdy, Marine History of the Pacific Northwest 1895-1965 (Seattle: Superior Publishing, 1966), p. 28.

80 William Ogilvie, Early Days on the Yukon (Ottawa: Thornburn & Abbott, 1913), pp. 81-82.

81 W.H.T. Olive, op. cit., p. 168.

82 Yukon Archives, RG1, Box 1 uncatalogued series, Greer to Gray, 21 June 1899. The letter also includes a newpaper clipping from Victoria Times dated 20 June, 1899 announcing the consolidation.

83 Yukon Archives, RG1, Box 1 uncatalogued series, Gray to Elliot, 25 Aug. 1899 and Gray to Graves, 19 June 1899. Macauly had arranged to

purchase material from "the Canadian Pacific narrow gauge Gault Extension" in Ontario. The construction material consisted of one or two narrow gauge engines, 300 tons of rails, and 100 tons of fish-plates, bars and spikes, all of which were to be shipped to the tramway site, apparently to take the place of the wooden tramway. the improvements were apparently never made.

84 H.W. McCurdy, op. cit., p. 39; Dawson Daily News, 17 July 1900.

85 Dawson Daily News, 21 December 1899.

86 Whitehorse Star, 27 February 1901.

87 Edwin C. Bearss, op. cit., p. 274.

88 H.W. McCurdy, op. cit., p. 46.

89 Gordon Bennett, op. cit., p. 81.

90 Yukon Archives, Yukon Territorial Records, Commissioners Letterbook, Ogilvie to Post Master General, 14 December 1899.

91 Canada. Public Archives (hereafter cited as PAC), RG91, Vol. 10, file 1699, Petition from Whitehorse Board of Trade to Commissioner, Yukon Territory; PAC, RG91, Vol. 10, file 1699, Commander "H" Division to Brown, 14 Sept. 1901.

92 Bennett Sun, 7 July 1900.

93 Ibid.

94 Yukon Archives, RG1, Box 1 uncatalogued series, Hawkins to Graves, June 1900.

95 Ibid., Adair to Hawkins, 16 February 1900.

96 Ibid., telegram, Hawkins to Graves, 1 February 1901; Whitehorse Star, 27 February 1901.

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1 Canada. Public Archives (hereafter cited as PAC), RG18, Vol. 154, file 445-98, Report for the month of April, Steele to White, 6 May 1898.

2 PAC, RG18, Vol. 154, file 445-98, Report for the month of May, Steele, to White, 10 June 1898.

3 Samuel B. Steele, Forty Years in Canada (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1950), p. 310.

4 Canada. Parliament, "Annual Report of Inspector D'A.E. Strickland, Appendix F, Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force, 1898," in Sessional Papers, 1899 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1899), p. 83.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Samuel B. Steele, op. cit., p. 311.

8 Ibid.

9 PAC, RG18, Vol. 154, file 445-98, Report for the month of July, Steele to White, 31 July 1898.

10 PAC, RG18, Register of Persons Inwards, December 1898 to September 1900.

11 PAC, RG18, Vol. 194, file 608-00, memo. from White, July 1900.

12 "To Tunnel Chilkoot," Dawson Daily News, 2 October 1899.

13 PAC, RG18, Vol. 175, file 679-99, Perry to White, 25 September 1899.

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15 "Chilkoots Craggy Heights to be Climbed by railroad," Dawson Daily News, 17 July 1900.

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